August 2017

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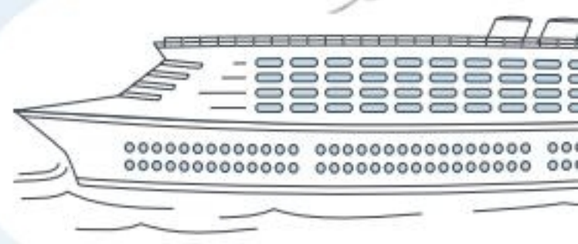

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1255 Great Oaks Drive · Landfall · $3,595,000

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2229 Masons Point Place · Landfall · $1,245,000

Beautifully sited atop one of Landfall's waterfront bluffs, this Nick Garrett built house directly overlooks Howe Creek with views of the ICW & the Atlantic. The shake and stone custom design features an open floor plan with fantastic views from practically every room.

2004 Montrose Lane · Landfall · $1,150,000

Overlooking the scenic par 3 #2 of Landfall's Jack Nicklaus designed Marsh golf course, this fabulous new construction home will feature nearly 4500 square feet of luxury appointments including a gourmet kitchen, first floor master suite with spa-like bath, an open floor plan with loads of built-ins, hardwood floors and heavy moldings.

736 Royal Bonnet Drive · Kentwood Village · $479,000

The location says it all! Easy walk to the shops, restaurants and the theatres of Mayfaire. This brick home in Kentwood Village offers all the bells and whistles including a beautifully updated kitchen with granite, stainless appliances, updated elegant baths, fenced rear yard with a screened porch, new deck, gas fire pit and outdoor cooking station.

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2106 Stillwater Place · Landfall · $749,000

Located on the first green of Landfall's Jack Nicklaus designed ocean course, this all brick house features an open floor plan with 3 bedrooms on the first floor each with a private bath including a spacious master suite with his and her closets, walk-in shower with frameless glass enclosure and granite counters.

806 S. Lumina Avenue · Wrightsville Beach · $1,695,000

Locals know how special the south end of Wrightsville Beach is! With it's wide smooth beach, protected dunes and rock jetty; it offers some of our area's best swimming, surfing and fishing. This second row house offers beautiful views of the ocean and has a CAMA beach access just steps away.

621 Dundee Drive · Landfall· $1,395,000

Situated on a high bluff rising above a bend on Howe's Creek, spectacular 180 degree views of the creek! One of Landfall's most striking residences custom designed by award winning Michael Kersting.

1204 Forest Island Place · Landfall · $949,000

Quality built by Old South Building and Mack Braxton this low country design features deep covered porches on front and back (screened) and open floor plan with the emphasis on large rooms, high ceilings, hardwood floors and beautiful moldings/built-ins.

1427 Pembroke Jones Drive · Landfall · $739,000

This low country design is located in Landfall's cherished first phase and offers broken views of the Pete Dye Lake. From stepping into the marble foyer to the vaulted sunken living room; from the spacious new kitchen overlooking breakfast area and sunroom to the first floor master suite with new bath (including frameless shower) and his and her walk-in closets.

2020 Montrose Lane · Landfall · $1,495,000

Located on the 3rd hole and tranquil pond of Landfall's Jack Nicklaus designed Marsh course, this spacious Mediterranean design features a low maintenance brick exterior and tile roof with an expanded 3 car garage. Over 4,000 square feet of luxury appointments including 10-12 foot ceilings, travertine floors, huge granite kitchen with beautiful granite tile back splash and high end stainless appliances.

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2017 Balmoral Place · Landfall · $2,195,000

Located on the headwaters and tidal Marsh of the Howe Creek in Landfall's estate area of The Highlands, this 1.7 acre property is gated and fenced. The Mediterranean style boasts high ceilings with loads of natural light and includes 6 bedrooms each with bath en suite and 2 additional half baths.

415 Marshland Drive · Landfall · $949,000

Enter the double-gated circular drive to this all brick Highland Ridge home built by Logan Homes. This nearly acre lot abuts Pembroke Jones Lake and offers over 4300 square feet. Some quality details include double front doors, arched doorways, floor to ceiling windows, built-ins, hardwood floors and a three car garage.

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2204 Masons Point Pl- $825,000– Landfall

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- Golf course views
- Screened in porch

1022 Ocean Ridge Dr- $975,000– Landfall

- 4 Beds/5 Full 2 Half BA
- 4839 Sq Ft
- Views of ICWW
- First floor Master Suite

809 Swift Wind Pl- $1,225,000– Landfall

- 5 Beds/5.5 Baths
- 6150 Sq Ft
- Quiet cul-de-sac
- Lrg walk-in wine cellar

4832 Drummond Dr- $460,000– Lansdowne South

- 5 Beds/4.5 Baths
- 4156 Sq Ft
- Popular school district
- Salt water pool w/slide

818 Schloss St- $1,675,000– Wrightsville Beach

- 5 Beds/3.5 Baths
- 4520 Sq Ft
- Ocean & sound views
- Top floor Master Suite

2022 Kenilworth Ln- $615,000– Landfall

- 3 Beds/3.5 Baths
- 3455 Sq Ft
- Upgrades galore
- Screened in porch

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Notes From a Firefly Summer

A message from tiny lights shining in the darkness

By Jim Dodson

Early one morning back in late June — the eve of the summer solstice, as it happened — while I was making coffee in the kitchen before sunrise, I heard a small sound of an animal in distress. I stepped out to our carport and found a baby rabbit lying on his back, his feet lightly kicking, as he looked up at me.

I gently scooped up the little fella, wondering how he'd gotten into such a fix. But then it came to me.

He'd been brought home by one Boo Radley, our young tiger cat who was at present missing his collar and bell. This explained everything. Wearing his bell, Boo Radley is a fairly harmless dude on the prowl. Without it, a feline serial killer and menace to small creatures everywhere. He'd been roaming free for a full week without his collar and bell, which also explained the dead yellow finch I'd found on the stone path beneath the feeder out back and buried in the primroses.

Fortunately the tiny rabbit's injuries appeared slight. As I carried him across the street to a wild area in my neighbor's yard where lots of rabbits congregate in the evening, I thought about a couple of books about rabbits that helped to shape my view of life.

The first was Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, which I still own a copy of, given to me by my mother at a very early age, along with Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*. These were the first two chapter books I'd read during the solitary summer days in the small Southern town where my father worked for the newspaper.

Before I set him down in the tall grass, I gently massaged the baby rabbit between the ears and gave him the only line from *Peter Rabbit* that I could recall: "Maybe your mother will put you to bed with some chamomile tea."

Our neighborhood, which is old and heavily forested, teems with rabbits. We see them in groups on our early morning and evening walks with the dogs. I joke that we actually live in Bunnyland, a vast empire of tunnels and warrens where these small brown herbivores who are either considered a nuisance by gardeners or a sign of ecological harmony by tree huggers — and I am both things, by the way — reside in a world of their own, coming out at the corners of the day to munch on clover and grass and any fool's unfenced veggie patch. Most are so tame you can walk within a few feet of them.

I freely admit having a soft spot for rabbits, probably because of Peter Rabbit but also because the first living creature I intentionally killed was a rabbit, which I shot one cold afternoon while hunting with my father on Henry Tucker's farm in the hills west of town. I was 12 or 13. It was late on New Year's Day. The rabbit stood up as we approached across the stubble of a harvested cornfield, erect as a Presbyterian elder. It was my first hunt. Several young rabbits scampered away in terror but the old rabbit stood his ground on his haunches watching us approach. I leveled my 20-gauge and pulled the trigger without a second thought.

My dad made me take the rabbit home to skin and cook, pointing out his belief that it would be a crime not to honor the rabbit's life by wasting his flesh. I ate as much of it as I could bear, thinking how, just hours before, this hand-some elder of the rabbit race had been out for his last New Year's walk. Off and on, I dreamed about that rabbit for years.

And I never hunted again.

But I soon learned much more about guns and the brevity of life. When I was 21, my girlfriend was murdered by a 15-year-old kid with a handgun during a botched robbery of a country club in the mountains. Within a few years I was a staffer for the biggest news magazine in the South, covering Atlanta's record crime wave, interviewing grieving families and coaching a mixed-race baseball team in a city where someone was killing young black kids and tossing their bodies into the Chattahoochee River. The kids on my team and their parents were terrified that they might be next, which is why I drove them home to the federal housing project after practices and games.

During this dark passage of life, I also covered victims of a shooting war on the Texas border with Mexico for a national church magazine, went undercover at a notorious Tennessee game preserve, interviewed convicted murderers, rode with homicide cops, traveled with armed Klansmen and watched a dozen autopsies. One hot August night while walking my dog down our leafy and quiet street in Midtown, I even saw my neighbor shot dead on his porch during a late-night robbery. He was an Emory med student whose promising life went

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMEY PETITE

out like a porch light. He died as his hysterical girlfriend and I waited for the emergency medical technicians to arrive.

Somewhere about that time, I read Richard Adams's leporine masterpiece *Watership Down* and decided I'd had enough killing. Days after I turned 30, I pulled up stakes and moved to the banks of a green river in southern Vermont where I rented a small cabin heated by firewood that I split by hand. There, I taught myself to fly fish, procured a pup from the local Humane Society, resumed playing golf and read every book I'd ever meant to read including *Watership Down* for a second — maybe even a third — time. It became my favorite book.

On summer evenings in the wildflower meadow just outside my cabin door, I'd sit until well after dark watching fireflies dance and rabbits feed. Sometimes the rabbits came right up to my doorstep. Amos the dog was fascinated by them but trained not to give chase. Some grew so unafraid of us they hopped right up to him. I think they thought he might be one very big rabbit.

Years later, when I kept a large flower garden on a hilltop in Maine, I made a silent deal with the rabbits and white-tailed deer that inhabited our forest keep. I planted them a summer garden near a vernal spring at the back of our property, where they fed contentedly through the summer and into the fall. In winter, I trudged out under an Arctic moon to dump 50-pound bags of sorghum on the summer feeding spot. I even made up a fanciful tale about a couple of bumbling black bears called Pete and Charlie who dined in our "Animal Garden," a tale both my now-grown children vividly recall. Pete and Charlie were part of all our lives, and probably will be for a long time.

Magically — or by random luck — the deer and rabbits never ate my Volkswagen-sized hostas or other tender bedding plants. Ours really was a Peaceable Kingdom.

So what do you suppose is a firefly's true purpose in this world?

My grandmother, Beatrice Taylor, used to say "lightning bugs" were simply God's way of reminding us of how brief one's light shines in this world. She refused to let my brother and me collect them in a jar, citing their fragile dance with mortality.

My own belief is that fireflies are in this world simply to delight and make us pause in a darkening landscape, and remember what childhood felt like, inspiring a true sense of awe over a bug that serenely lights up as it goes its way through the uncertain night. What a living metaphor for how to live your own life.

Whatever else can be said of this firefly summer, regardless of a world beyond the neighborhood and childhood imagination that forever appears to be in danger of coming apart at the seams, it's been a bountiful season of bunnies and fireflies in our neck of the woods — and kids playing in the dark, too.

The other evening we passed a group of a dozen youngsters of various sizes — toddlers to young teens — joyfully playing a game my wife and I both loved to play in the long summer dusks of our childhoods. My Southern neighborhood gang called it "Red light, Green Light," my wife's Yankee crowd, "Statue." The name changes but not the basic idea. These kids called their updated version "Night at the Museum."

As a central figure shuts eyes and counts out loud, the players attempt to advance "home" without being seen moving when the count is up and the leader's eyes suddenly open. Players must freeze like rabbits or statues on the lawn. As we watched, a tiny barefoot girl was the first to reach "home", gleefully slapping hands with the older kids.

Just then we heard a mother's voice calling to her children, another welcome echo of American childhood. Somewhere in the darkness, young Boo Radley was on the prowl again, a world made safer by his new collar and bell.

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

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Designs for Living

Bald Head Island is the glorious setting for the 2017 *Southern Living* Idea House, a newly constructed residence nestled among the live oaks in the island's Cape Fear Station neighborhood. Built by Whitney Blair Custom Homes in collaboration with architectural designer Eric Moser of Moser Design Group in Beaufort, South Carolina, the showhouse is decorated by interior designer Lindsey Coral Harper, a native Georgian whose studio is now based in New York City. Jam-packed with inspiring decorating ideas for every homeowner, the Idea House is a great day trip to Bald Head, which features more than 10,000 acres of beautiful beaches, nature preserves and maritime forests (and no cars). 204 Whale Head Way, Bald Head Island. Open Wednesdays – Sundays through Labor Day, and on weekends in September and October. A portion of all house tour ticket sales benefit the nonprofit Old Baldy Foundation, which supports the historic linghthouse on Bald Head Island. For more information and to purchase tickets online: southernliving.com/ideahouse.

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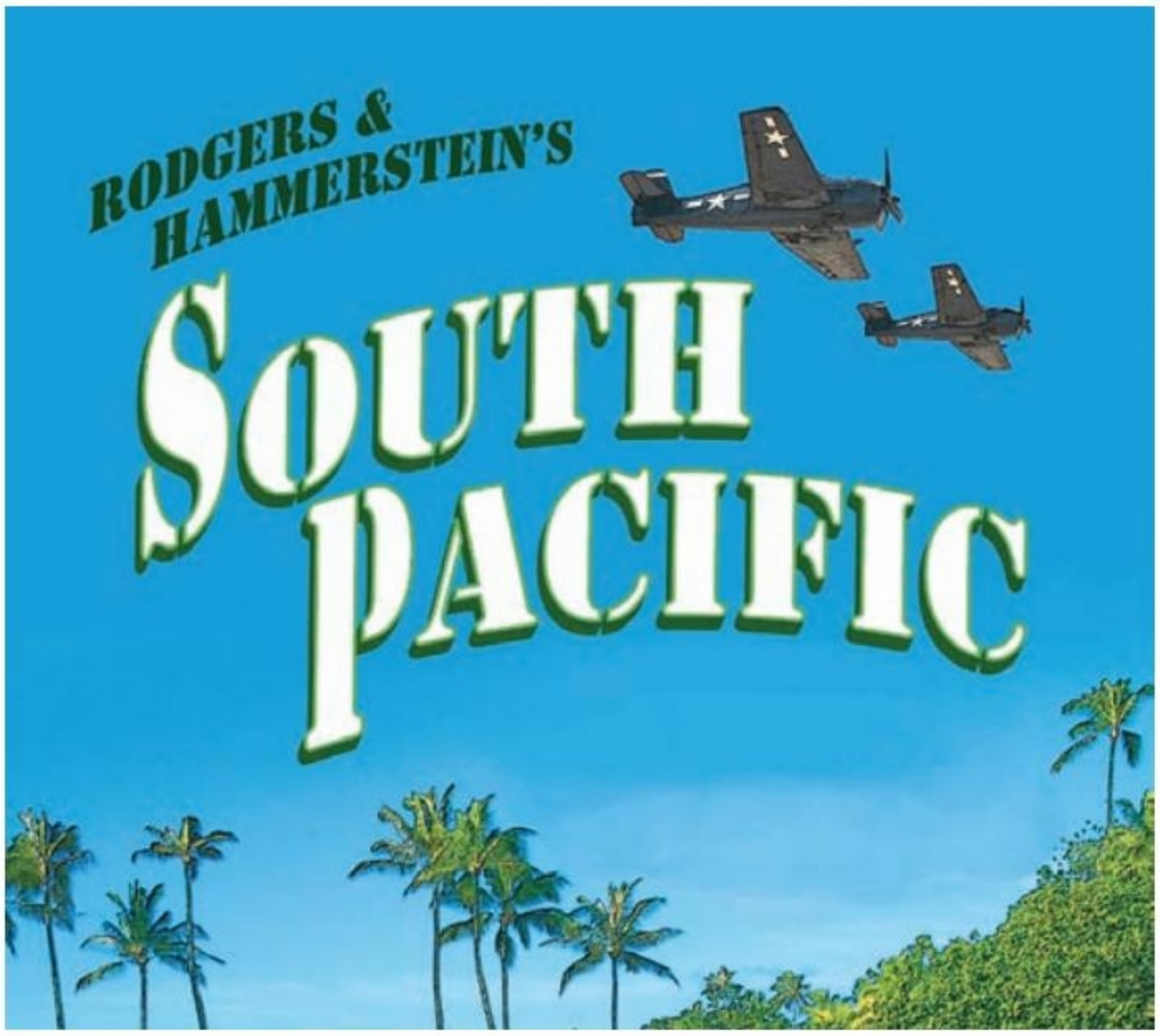
Life's a Beach

Historian Jan Davidson will give a lecture titled "Beaches: Views From the Cape Fear Museum's Collection," featuring vintage postcards and views of the oceanfront communities of New Hanover County. Sunday, Aug. 6, 2 p.m. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market St., Wilmington. Admission: Free. Info: (910) 798-4350 or capefearmuseum.org.



Some Enchanted Evening

Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical *South Pacific* was a smash hit when it opened on Broadway in 1949. Based on James Michener's book *Tales of the South Pacific*, which won the Pulitzer Prize, the plot tells the story of an American nurse who struggles to accept her plantation-owner lover's mixed-race children. A parallel story line explores the love affair between a U.S. lieutenant and a Tonkinese woman. The winner of ten Tony awards, including best musical, best score, and best libretto, *South Pacific* also had a best-selling cast album. And who can be surprised with such classics at "Bali Ha'i," "Some Enchanted Evening" and "Younger Than Springtime"? Opera House Theatre Company's production runs for 11 performances, from Aug. 2 through 20. Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Tickets $27-32. Information: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

Surf's Up

Life Rolls On was established by world champion quadriplegic surfer Jesse Billauer in 2001 and is devoted to helping to improve the quality of life of children affected by spinal cord injury through adaptive surfing and skating programs. On Saturday, Aug. 5, the organization will host "They Will Surf Again," a free day on the ocean in Carolina Beach for people of all ages with disabilities. Hundreds of volunteers will supply adaptive surfboards and beach transfer wheelchairs, and free breakfast and lunch will be provided for registered athletes and volunteers. All you need to bring is your enthusiasm and a beach towel. 7:30 am. 2 Carolina Beach Ave. North, Carolina Beach. For information and to register as an athlete or a volunteer (required): liferollson.org/northcarolina.

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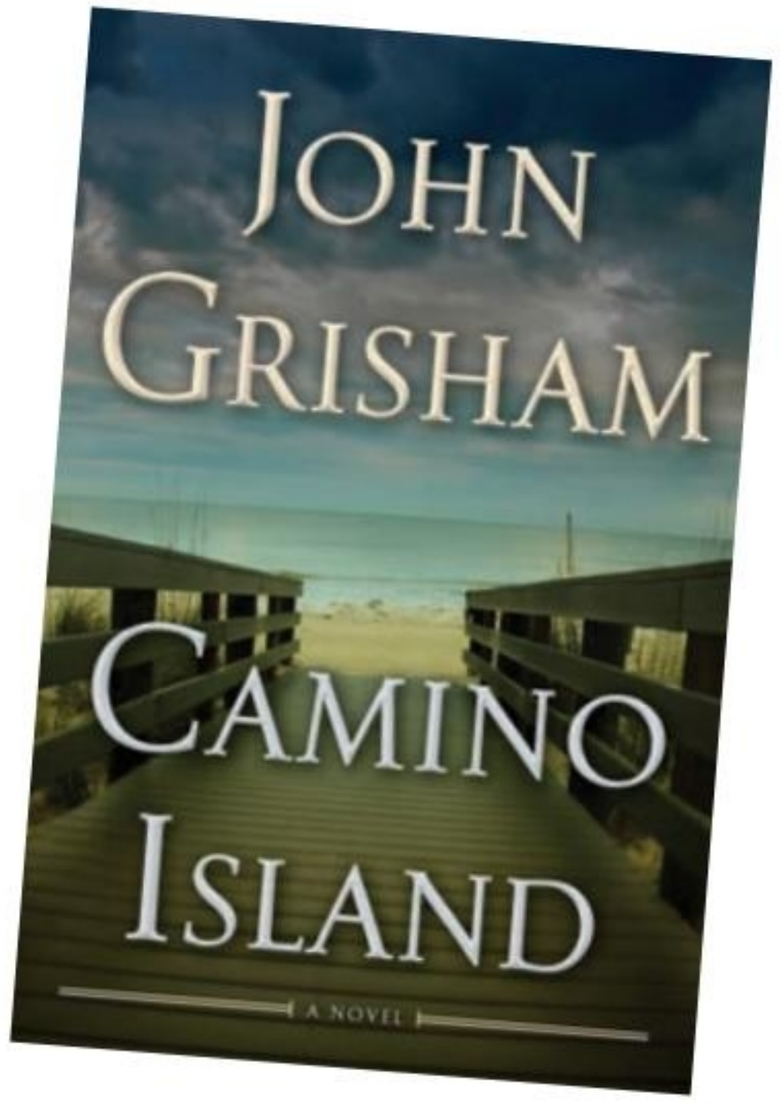
Change of Place

How the king of the legal thriller became an adopted son of Carolina



By D.G. Martin

When John Grisham's latest novel, *Camino Island*, hit bookstore shelves in June, it immediately rose to number one on *The New York Times* best-seller list and stayed there for weeks.

No surprise there. That is what John Grisham's books do.

But *Camino Island* is different from most of Grisham's previous 30 novels. It is not his usual legal thriller in which crimes and mystery intersect with the lives of lawyers and judges. Lawyers make only cameo appearances in the new book.

Instead, the action is set in the literary world — the world of writing, publishing and selling books. There is also a literary underworld of criminals who steal and sell valuable manuscripts. Grisham still gives us a crime story. But this time writers, readers and booksellers, as well as thieves, take center stage.

One of the book's central characters gives it a strong North Carolina connection. Mercer Mann, a writing instructor at UNC-Chapel Hill, is losing her job. She suffers writer's block as she tries to complete her second novel to follow up her first mildly successful one. Carrying a burden of tens of thousands of dollars in student debt, she is at loose ends. Her desperate situation and some other personal connections make her a prime target to be recruited for an undercover assignment to help recover a stash of valuable stolen papers.

Earlier, a group of clever thieves has broken into the Princeton University library and walked away with the original manuscripts of *The Great Gatsby* and four other novels written by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The papers were insured for $25 million. The insurance company suspects that Bruce Cable, a rare book dealer and bookstore owner, has possession of the Fitzgerald papers. He is the center of a group of writers, fans and book collectors on Camino Island, a small resort community near Jacksonville, Florida.

Somehow investigators for the insurance company learn that Mercer's grandparents had lived on Camino Island, that their house is still in the family, and that Mercer has been a frequent visitor. The company sends the case's lead investigator, Elaine Shelby, to Chapel Hill to recruit Mercer. She wants Mercer to go to Camino Island, where she can infiltrate Bruce's group, make friends with him, and try to learn whether he has the Fitzgerald papers.

In Chapel Hill, Elaine wines and dines Mercer at Spanky's and the Lantern restaurants, two of the town's favorites, and, incidentally, not far from the house where Grisham and his wife, Renee, live when they visit their daughter and her family, who live in Raleigh.

Mercer is a reluctant recruit, but Elaine is persistent and persuasive. Elaine's promise to pay Mercer's student debt is a clincher. She tells Elaine, "I have sixty-one thousand dollars in student debt that I can't get rid of. It's a burden that consumes every waking hour and it's making me crazy."

Elaine promises, "We'll take care of the student loans." Plus, she offers another $100,000.

Later, when Mercer has doubts, Elaine continues to persuade, "You're a writer living at the beach for a few months in the family cottage. You're hard at work on a novel. It's the perfect story, Mercer, because it's true. And you have the perfect personality because you're genuine. If we needed a con artist we wouldn't be talking right now."

Sure enough, Mercer becomes part of the group of writers who gather around Bruce and his bookstore. Some of them, Mercer discovers, "are seasoned raconteurs with an endless supply of stories and quips and one-liners. Others are reclusive and introverted souls who labor in their solitary worlds and struggle to mix and mingle."

As she mingles and mixes, she learns that the popular authors whose books have sold well "longed for critical acclaim, while the literary ones . . . longed for greater royalties."

Getting to know the writers leads to Mercer getting to know Bruce, the smart and charming owner of Bay Books. He owns a dozen seersucker suits and wears a different color each day. He has persuaded 100 customers to collect signed first editions and to put in a standing order to buy signed copies of the latest book by every visiting author. Bay Books makes big money on the sales, and those sales attract book tour visits by America's most popular authors.

Bruce does well as an independent bookseller. He does even better collecting and selling rare books and signed first editions.

Is he also making even more money dealing in the dark world of stolen books and papers?

Mercer's assignment is to get to know Bruce well enough to learn whether

he has possession of Princeton's Fitzgerald papers. By courting and charming him, she ultimately finds the answer.

Meanwhile, he is courting and charming her, too. While she is finding out about his dark world, he prepares defenses to turn the tables on her and the investigators' plot to prove that Bruce has his hands on the Fitzgerald papers.

So, as the story moves toward an expected ending, Grisham does his usual. He twists the expected into a set of cascading surprises that will fool, entertain and delight his readers, just as he does in his legal thrillers.

Is there more than an entertaining story here? Does Grisham, for instance, want to highlight our country's growing problem with the student debt that is affecting so many young Americans? He says not. The student debt burden on Mercer, he says, is just a small plot point in the *Camino Island* story. But, according to Grisham, his next legal thriller, coming out in October, will have overwhelming student debt as a central feature of the new novel's plot.

North Carolinians love their authors. They love for North Carolina authors to have the kind of success Grisham enjoys. Some North Carolina Grisham fans argue that his growing connections to our state give us grounds to say that he is one of us.

Grisham himself says his farm near Charlottesville, Virginia, is his home and that he is very happy there.

However, his North Carolina contacts are substantial. In addition to his house in Chapel Hill, his daughter's family in Raleigh, and the Chapel Hill scenes in the latest book, he is a Carolina basketball fan. Grisham and popular television host Charlie Rose have an ongoing $100 bet on every Carolina-Duke basketball game. Rose supports his alma mater, Duke. Grisham bets on Carolina.

On his recent book tour to promote *Camino Island*, he made only 11 stops. Four were in North Carolina, twice as many as in any other state. Along the way he invited other North Carolina literary giants — Randall Kenan, Jill McCorkle, John Hart, Ron Rash, Wiley Cash and Clyde Edgerton — to discuss their work.

Even if Grisham and his wife are still proud Virginians, we can declare them honorary North Carolinians.

Grisham dedicated *Camino Island* to Renee. He gives her credit for helping develop the new book's plot as they were driving to Florida for vacation. They collect rare books and signed first editions. When they heard a radio report about a stolen rare book, they were off and running and had the outline of the book developed before they got out of the car.

I bet they were driving through North Carolina when the idea hit.

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John Grisham's Do's and Don'ts for Writing Popular Fiction*

1. DO WRITE A PAGE EVERY DAY
That's about 200 words, or 1,000 words a week. Do that for two years and you'll have a novel that's long enough. Nothing will happen until you are producing at least one page per day.

2. DON'T WRITE THE FIRST SCENE UNTIL YOU KNOW THE LAST
This necessitates the use of a dreaded device commonly called an outline. Virtually all writers hate that word. I have yet to meet one who admits to using an outline. Plotting takes careful planning. Writers waste years pursuing stories that eventually don't work.

3. DO WRITE YOUR ONE PAGE EACH DAY AT THE SAME PLACE AND TIME
Early morning, lunch break, on the train, late at night — it doesn't matter. Find the extra hour, go to the same place, shut the door. No exceptions, no excuses.

4. DON'T WRITE A PROLOGUE
Prologues are usually gimmicks to hook the reader. Avoid them. Plan your story (see No. 2) and start with Chapter 1.

5. DO USE QUOTATION MARKS WITH DIALOGUE
Please do this. It's rather basic.

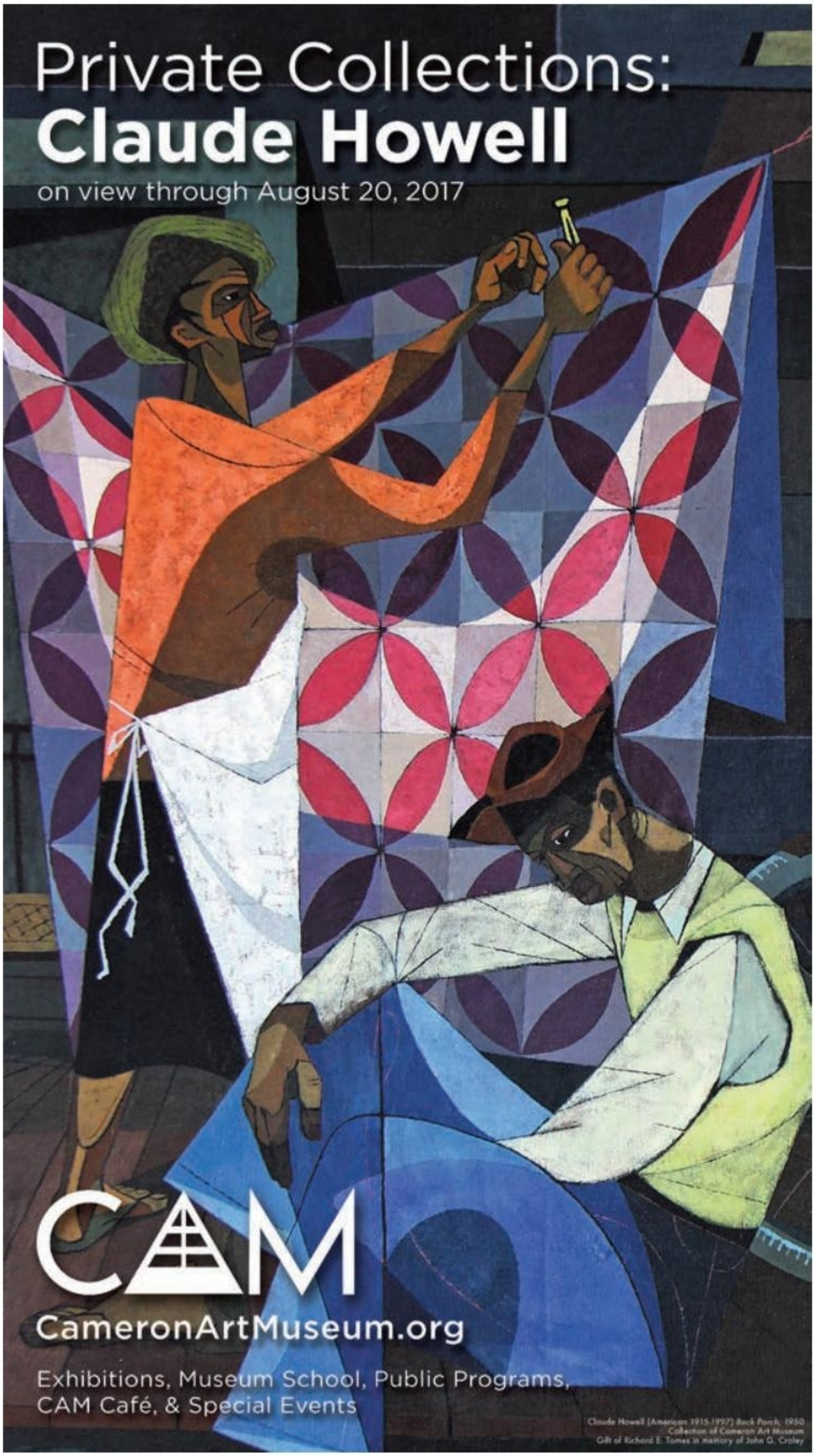
6. DON'T KEEP A THESAURUS WITHIN REACHING DISTANCE
I know, I know, there's one at your fingertips. There are three types of words: (1) words we know; (2) words we should know; (3) words nobody knows. Forget those in the third category and use restraint with those in the second.
A common mistake by fledgling authors is using jaw-breaking vocabulary. It's frustrating and phony.

7. DO READ EACH SENTENCE AT LEAST THREE TIMES IN SEARCH OF WORDS TO CUT
Most writers use too many words, and why not? We have unlimited space and few constraints.

8. DON'T INTRODUCE 20 CHARACTERS IN THE FIRST CHAPTER
Another rookie mistake. Your readers are eager to get started. Don't bombard them with a barrage of names from four generations of the same family. Five names are enough to get started.

*Shared first in *The New York Times*, May 31, 2017.

D.G. Martin hosts North Carolina Bookwatch, *which airs Sundays at noon and Thursdays at 5 p.m. on UNC-TV.*



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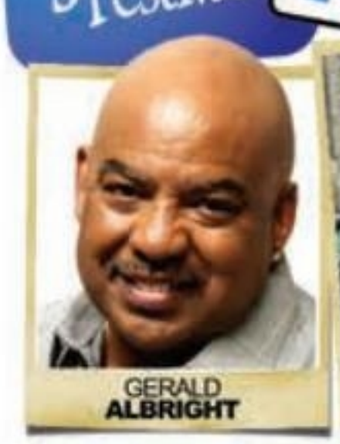
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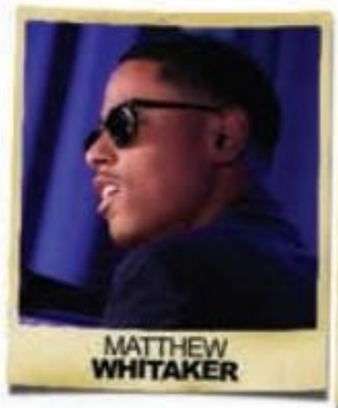
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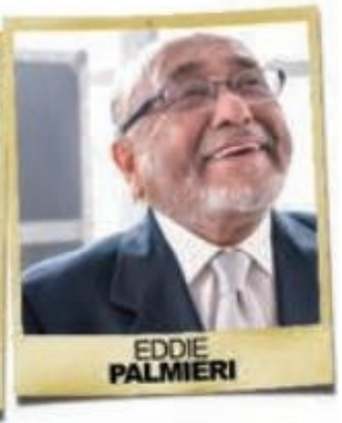
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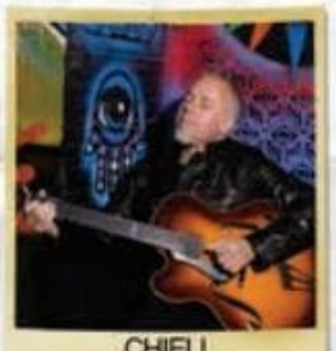
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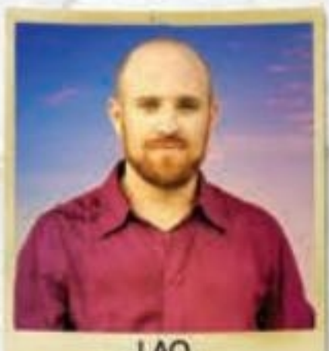
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Writing My Way Home

Finding one's place in a wide literary landscape

By Wiley Cash

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what
I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you.

Langston Hughes wrote these lines and the poem "Theme for English B," from which they're taken, in 1951, when he was nearing 50 years old. I first read the poem as a 20-year-old college sophomore. I'll turn 40 in a few months, and I can honestly say I've thought about this poem almost every day since I read it.

In the poem, the speaker's college composition teacher has asked the students to go home tonight and compose a page about themselves, and whatever results from this assignment will speak to something about who the students are, where they're from, and what they're made of. The idea is that what comes from you speaks to what there is of you.

As I mentioned, I was a college sophomore when I encountered "Theme for English B." I had enrolled at the University of North Carolina-Asheville because the English major featured a track in creative writing, and a writer was what I had decided to be. I was a little unclear as to how this would be accomplished, but I was there to learn, and learn I did. But looking back, the best thing I learned about writing was that I wasn't the kind of writer I wanted to be, meaning I wasn't someone who wrote like Raymond Carver, Anton Chekhov or Toni Morrison, nor did I write about the things these authors wrote about. I had never visited Carver's Great Northwest. I couldn't imagine the lives of Chekhov's peasants. I couldn't speak to the African-American experience in Morrison's Ohio. These people lived interesting lives of conflict and history and culture, and they hailed from interesting places.

I was from Gastonia, North Carolina, raised Southern Baptist, loved basketball with all my heart, and spent my summers lifeguarding and my free time reading the masterworks of authors whose lives were more curious than mine, and whose literary voices were more distinct and powerful as a result. But I kept writing. In my little campus dorm room I locked my eyes on the monitor while my fingers pecked away at the keyboard of an enormous, ancient computer. Not once did I lift my gaze to look at the world around me, not once did I dare look back at the world from which I'd come. As a result, the stories that spun from my fingers were regionless, devoid of place, meaning they were almost wholly devoid of life. I refused to acknowledge that any place I was from could be interesting enough to warrant representation, and I also refused to acknowledge the fact that I couldn't write well enough to make up for the "placelessness" of my fiction.

In the fall of 2003, I left North Carolina at the age of 25 and lived outside the state for the first time in my life. I had enrolled in a Ph.D. program in English and creative writing at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette, which is in the heart of Acadiana, more commonly known as Cajun country. Soon, I found that I missed fresh water. I missed the gentle swell of the Piedmont hills as they rose toward the Blue Ridge Mountains. I missed cold winters and mild summers. I missed the good, clean smell of mud that wafts up from a trickling stream as you draw closer to the water. I missed ferns. I missed the music, accents and cuisine I'd always known as comforts without ever realizing the emotional tether they had on my heart. In short, I missed home.

I had chosen this particular graduate program in this particular state because a particular author served as the university's writer-in-residence. Ernest J. Gaines had long been my literary hero, and I still believe he's one of the finest writers our nation has ever produced. He'd grown up on a plantation just west of Baton Rouge, the same plantation on which his ancestors had been slaves and later sharecroppers, but he hadn't begun to write about the place he knew until he joined his mother and stepfather in California when he was 15 years old. He wrote about southwest Louisiana because it was

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMEY PETITE

inside him largely because it was no longer outside him, and he longed for it. He began writing about Louisiana while he lived in California, and it led to some of the most important literature in American history: *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, *A Gathering of Old Men* and *A Lesson Before Dying*.

Ernest J. Gaines and Thomas Wolfe are perhaps the greatest influences on my writing life, and I took a page from each. From Gaines I learned to write about what I know and where I've been, and from Thomas Wolfe, especially Wolfe's autobiographical hero Eugene Gant in *Look Homeward, Angel*, I decided to turn my eyes "to the distant, soaring ranges." My first novel is set in the mountains of western North Carolina, where I'd made the decision to become a writer. My second is set in my hometown of Gastonia, as is my third novel, *The Last Ballad*, which will be released this fall.

A few months ago I returned to Louisiana to spend a few days with Gaines and his wife, Dianne, where they purchased land and built a home on part of the plantation where Gaines was born and raised. One evening around dusk, I was standing on the banks of the False River across the street from the Gaineses' home when I recalled a line from Hughes' poem: *I guess I'm what I feel and see and hear.* I could feel the old dock beneath my boots, every creak as the water lapped against it. I could see the sun fading in the trees across the river, could see the lights winking on at homes on the other side of the water. I could hear the trucks and cars pass on the road behind me, the occasional motor of a boat that passed along the darkening water, the flip of a fish as it broke the surface and then fell beneath it. At that moment, I had no doubt that what I was feeling and seeing and hearing had turned me toward the writer I've become, but the things that surrounded me at that moment were not the things that made me the writer I am. Those things rested farther north in the hills and mountains of the Old North State, hidden along creek beds and gurgling streams. Shaded beneath towering maples and sweet gums. Pressed into the rich earth beneath a blanket of ferns.

I often wonder about the things that will make up my daughters' lives, as they will not be the things that have made up my own. They were both born only a few miles from the ocean, and they will both be raised in a landscape that is flat and in air that is humid and tinged with salt. Will they know the magic of the place from which they've come? Or, like me, will they have to leave home to find it?

Wiley Cash lives in Wilmington with his wife and their two daughters. His forthcoming novel The Last Ballad *is available for pre-order wherever books are sold.*

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My Guilty Pleasure

The bountiful state of young adult and middle grade literature in North Carolina

By Emily Colin

The Hunger Games, *The Maze Runner*, Cassandra Clare's *Mortal Instruments*, Veronica Roth's *Divergent*, John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* — these are just a few of the young adult book series that have achieved best-seller status in recent years and hung on tight. Each of them has become a movie or TV series — some arguably far better than others. They've garnered a diverse international readership, from the teenagers for whom they were written to adults who fell in love with young adult (YA) lit all over again. And they tackle tough issues — poverty, war, loss, terminal illness, being different from the norm in a censorious, unaccepting culture.

I will freely admit that reading YA lit is one of my guilty pleasures (let's just say that you could fit an entire K-12 education within the years since I graduated from college). For me, the appeal is, in part, the intensity and extremity of the characters' emotions — which comes along, of course, with being a teenager. But it's also the quality of the writing and the complex, intricate, original world-building that's present in so many of the YA fantasy novels on shelves today. And then there's the fact that so many YA books are written as series, which I adore.

There's some debate as to precisely how the genre is defined, but walk into any bookstore or type "YA lit" into your search engine of choice, and you'll have a solid idea of what the market will bear: A lot. Even *The New York Times* has its own Young Adult Hardcover best-seller list, and the Books section of NPR's website has an entire page dedicated to YA titles — solid fodder for those of us who feel as if we must keep our YA reading habit a dirty little secret.

One of the best parts of discovering the emergent world of YA lit was realizing just how many talented writers we have right here in North Carolina — and being able to engage with them in person. Last summer, I drove to Chapel Hill for the Flyleaf Books stop of the "Dangerous Ladies' 2.0 Tour," featuring North Carolina YA authors Beth Revis (*A World Without You*), Megan Miranda (*The Safest Lies*) and Megan Shepherd (*The Hunt*). The last was one of my favorite YA reads this past season, with points for sheer originality — imagine a human zoo in outer space, and you'll get the picture. It's the first book in a trilogy, and the third volume — *The Gauntlet* — came out on May 23. Run, don't walk, to the nearest bookstore and devour all three of them in one gulp.

I bought Beth Revis' book at the Dangerous Ladies' tour and sacrificed many hours of sleep, turning the pages until the sun rose. *A World Without You* delves deep into mental health issues, walking the delicate line between imagined truth and reality with finesse, so that the reader is left guessing until the last minute. This is one of the magic tricks that YA lit can do so well — give teens a glimpse into others' lives, create a sense of community, and help them feel that they are not alone. Too heavy for a summer read? Pick up a copy of Revis' new *Rebel Rising*, a novel focused on the early life of Jyn Erso, the heroine of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.

Although my personal taste runs to YA, I have a 12-year-old son, and we listen to a lot of middle grade (MG) audiobooks together. When it comes to figuring out what to download next, I often turn to the inimitable KidLit Drink Night Podcast, a self-described "podcast for grownups about kids' books" hosted by North Carolina author Amy Kurtz Skelding and facilitated by the Superfriends — fellow North Carolina kid-lit authors Karen Staman (MG writer and Gryffindor), Stephen Messer (*Windblowne*) and Leigh Statham (*The Perilous Journey of the Not-So-Innocuous Girl*).

KidLit Drink Night has introduced me — and, by proxy, my son — to some fabulous North Carolina middle grade authors, including Hillsborough-based John Claude Bemis, whose most recent series, an imaginative retelling of the Pinocchio story for MG readers, features two books thus far: *The Wooden Prince* and the just-released *Lord of Monsters*. I also hold KidLit Drink Night responsible for the spellbound hours we spent listening to the Serafina series, MG mystery-thrillers set at Biltmore Estate with a strong-willed — and highly unusual — female protagonist. Written by Asheville-based author Robert Beatty, the third book in the No. 1 *New York Times* best-selling series *Serafina and the Splintered Heart* came out on July 4.

YA and MG lit can provide a fabulous venue for imagination and escape,

but it can also give young readers the opportunity to explore challenging issues through the lens of fiction. Prolific North Carolina author Alan Gratz's new MG novel, *Refugee*, which came out on July 25, follows the stories of three displaced children seeking refuge from unrest — a Jewish boy in 1930s Germany, a Cuban girl in 1994, and a Syrian boy in 2015. And Asheville writer Joanne O'Sullivan's April debut, *Between Two Skies* — which received starred reviews from *Booklist*, *Kirkus* and *Shelf Awareness* — tells the story of a teenage girl dealing with devastation, loss and romance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

As I write this, some exciting new kid-lit releases are just around the corner: the anthology *Brave New Girls: Stories of Girls Who Science and Scheme* (coming August 1), featuring stories from North Carolina writers Michelle Leonard and Karissa Laurel; and UNC Wilmington professor David Macinnis Gill's September release, the YA supernatural thriller *Uncanny*. September is a hot month for North Carolina kid-lit authors: You won't want to miss Leigh Statham's *Daughter4254*, a YA dystopian novel that began its life on the online storytelling community Wattpad, where it garnered over 1 million reads.

One of the stars in North Carolina's YA firmament is Renee Adhieh, the author of *The Wrath and the Dawn*, a reimagining of *The Arabian Nights*, as well as the recently released *Flame in the Mist*, set against the backdrop of feudal Japan. Another member of the Dangerous Ladies tour (though the cast rotates and I didn't get a chance to see her in Chapel Hill), Adhieh is involved with the We Need Diverse Books project, which is committed to the inclusion of diverse characters in literature for young people. This diversity — of ethnicity, religion, gender, ability, sexuality, culture and more — is crucial to allowing YA and MG lit to do what they do best: create a mirror in which young people can see themselves, and a portal through which they can step, carrying with them their flawed, vivid, amazing selves . . . envisioning a world in which hope matters, actions make a difference, and even the most fragile of dreams are embers that just require a breath of oxygen to roar to life.

Colin's first novel, *The Memory Thief* (Ballantine Books, 2012), was a *New York Times* best-seller and Target Emerging Authors Pick. Publishers Weekly calls her second book, *The Dream Keeper's Daughter* (Ballantine, 2017), "a splendid mix of time travel, romantic yearning, and moving on after grief," and Romance Reviews Today recognized it with their Perfect 10 Award.

Emily Colin is the former associate director of DREAMS of Wilmington, a nonprofit serving youth in need through the arts. Visit her at www.emilycolin.com or find her on Twitter, extolling the virtues of being a Gryffindor, at @emilyacolin.

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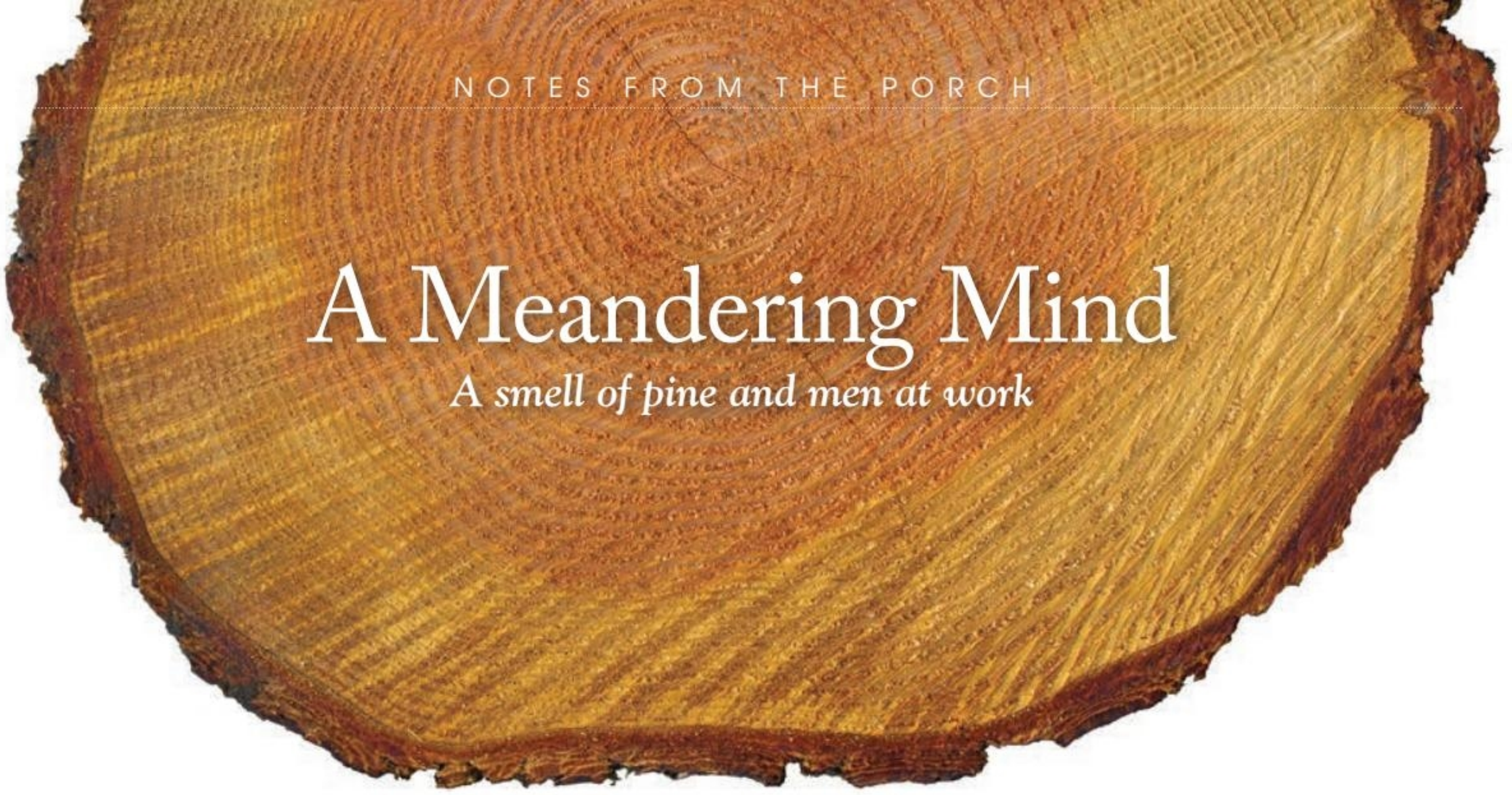

A Meandering Mind

A smell of pine and men at work

By Bill Thompson

I tend to meander through the past sometimes — more as I get older. Meandering is the perfect word for my thought process since it means there is no obvious direction involved, nothing of substance happening, and no specific goal in mind. Just about anything can set off my meandering. Just the other day, a log truck tried to turn the corner too short as it came out of the woods just down the road from my house. As a result, the trailer overturned and deposited about 20 pine logs on the road. Traffic was held up in both directions. As is the Southern custom, when traffic stops anywhere for more than five minutes, you get out of the car and walk to wherever the source of the holdup is. Part of that effort is to determine what caused the holdup, but the most important element is to tell whoever is in charge of clearing up the situation how to do it.

It was the smell of the pine logs that set off my meandering that day. When I was growing up in the little hamlet of Hallsboro, the lumber industry and farming were the main sources of income for the inhabitants. Even if your primary occupation was farming, you had to cut some of the trees on the farm to either clear the land for planting or provide some cash to tide you over until the crops came in.

Cutting timber assaulted and embraced the senses. Not all the woodland where I grew up was in the swamp, but it was usually wet nonetheless. So when folks went in to cut the trees, the traffic of tractors and trucks created a muck that not only made maneuvering difficult, but also generated a smell of mud and oil and rosin unique to that activity. Combine that with the smell of burning debris created by trimming the trees and clearing the brush, and you have an aroma that lingers and resurfaces in the meandering mind of an old man long after the scene has disappeared from the landscape.

The dormant odor of the woods at the site of the log truck accident stimulated not only my memory of the smells associated with a long-ago time and place, but also made me recall the sounds as well. There was the ringing thud of an ax; the regular, sharp, scrapping sound of the cross-cut saw as two men rhythmically cut through a towering tree; the shout of "Timber!" to warn of the impending crash of the falling arbor; and the powerful silence that followed: a quiet reverence.

Settled in among those old sounds, like the notes of a music chord, is the laughter of the men. Sometimes that laughter was shaded by some rough language that just provided a background like timpani to the brass and strings of the conversation. There were young men learning from old men, learning how to accomplish a job none of them could do alone, a job replete with traditions that could only be passed from person to person, traditions as old as the need for men to provide shelter for their families. Neighbors "swapped work," assisting each other when none of them could afford to hire help. They were glad for the help and loved the fellowship of labor. It was hard, dirty, back-breaking work, but it was honest work and generated a pride among the loggers, a pride that came from doing a job well.

Out of my memory of those nascent sights and smells emerged a scene that refocused in my meandering mind. There were men in overalls and long denim jackets, wide felt hats, and brogan shoes. They toiled in the mud under tall pine trees. They pulled the newly fallen logs to the loading dock with an old tractor, loaded the logs on old trucks using giant cant hooks and chains to secure the load. They were black men and white men: dressed the same, did the same work, bought their clothes and food at the same store, shared life together. They worked side by side, not because they wanted to but because they had to.

It's amazing what a meandering mind can conjure. Sometimes it might be real and sometimes it might be imagination or dreams. And sometimes, as my Grandmother Council once told me, "Sometimes the mind wanders just for the sake of wanderin.'" I agree with that.

Bill Thompson is a regular Salt *contributor. His newest novel,* Chasing Jubal, *a coming of age story in the 1950s Blue Ridge, is available where books are sold.*

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A Whisper, Not a Shout

How a former nun found her true calling as a midwife

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW SHERMAN

By Dana Sachs

Over lunch at San Juan Café, nurse-midwife Mary Slawter and I are struggling to find the verb that best describes her role in the birth of babies. "I don't like to use the word 'deliver,'" Mary says. Medical professionals "are not the ones laboring for 12 or 16 hours." When new mothers thank her for "delivering" their babies, she often replies, "You delivered this baby. You did all the work."

"So, what word would you use?" I ask.

Mary, who is 78, has a wry sense of humor, but she's serious now. After a moment, she says, "Caught?"

"Caught?"

"That's not good, either," she admits.

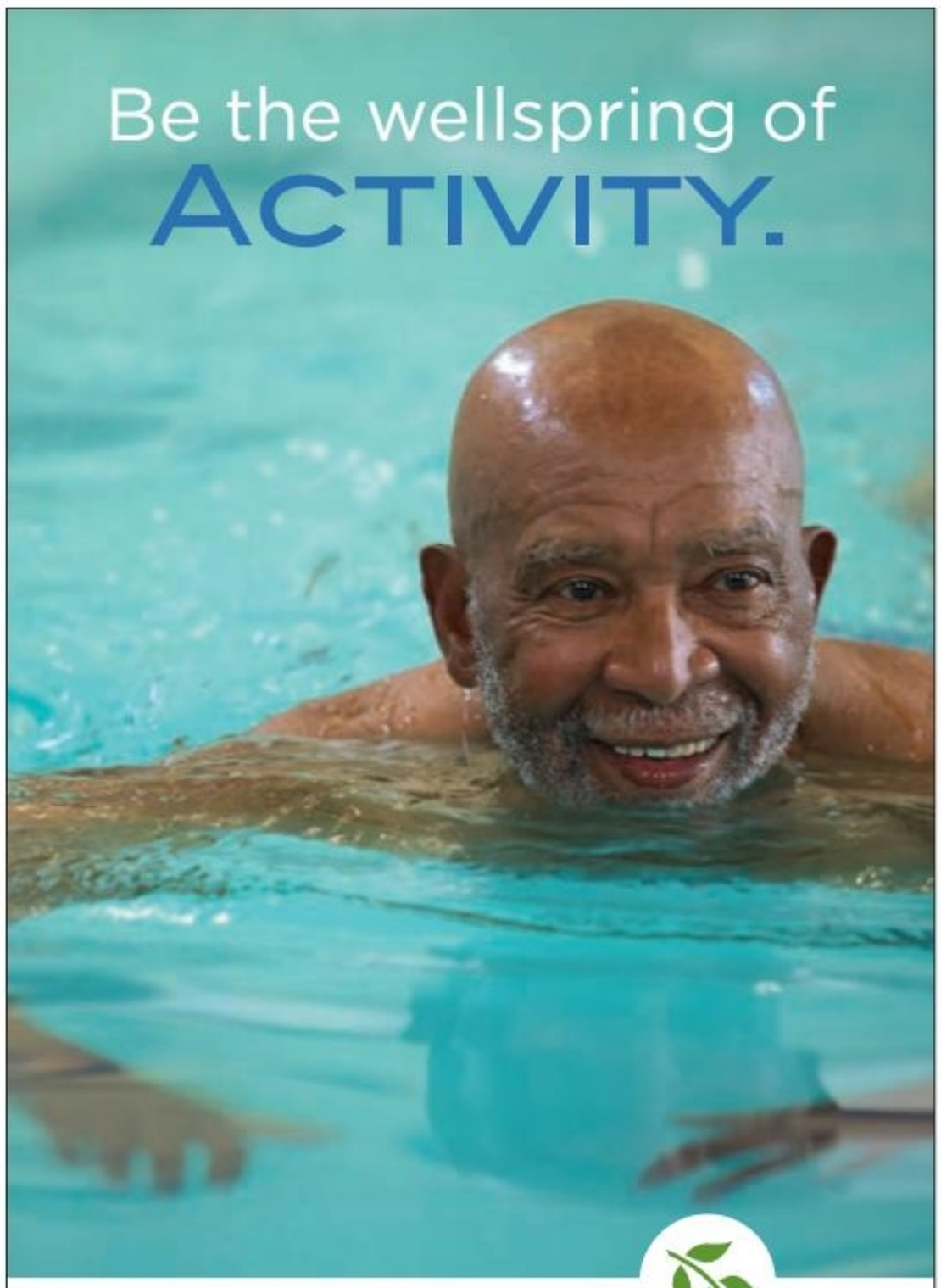
"Well, it's quite literal." Mary has spent 40 years as a nurse-midwife. By the time she arrived in Wilmington in 1998 to help found the first local midwifery practice, she had already spent decades assisting pregnant and laboring women, including African villagers, Cambodian refugees and rural farmers in Alabama. "Caught" seems to minimize the effect she has had on the lives of all these women.

But Mary likes "caught," so I decide to let it go as we talk about her life. Mary grew up in the 1940s and '50s, a Catholic schoolgirl in small-town New Jersey. "For as long as I could remember," she says, "I'd wanted to be a nurse, a nun, and go to Africa." But she wasn't sure how to do that. Then, in high school, Mary read about the Medical Mission Sisters, a religious order that practiced nursing all over the world. "I'll be a nun first," she told herself.

Mary realized the weight of her decision. "What if I don't feel God deeply enough?" she asked a nun at her school.

"It's not going to hit you over the head," the sister responded. "It's a whisper, not a shout."

That answer calmed her fears. At 17, Mary joined the Medical Mission Sisters, took her vows and began studying nursing. She planned to practice emergency medicine — "I thought maternal and child health was boring," she says — but her order directed her toward midwifery. Soon she discovered that she "really, really loved the women and the way we cared for them." In the United States at that time, maternity care had become highly medicalized. Many women received anesthesia during labor and essentially slept through



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their births. Midwifery, in contrast, "was very natural. Women could eat (while in labor) and walk around as long as everything was going normally." A well-trained midwife, Mary saw, could have a positive effect on pregnancy and birth and be a safe alternative to obstetrical care.

In 1971, the Medical Mission Sisters sent Mary to rural Ghana. Here, women had minimal access to health care and often delivered babies on their own. One laboring woman walked 5 miles to the hospital, then "delivered her baby 10 minutes later." Often, Mary ended up playing a major role in women's care. When a patient lost a great deal of blood while delivering twins, Mary drove out to the patient's village to find donors. "I begged anyone!" she recalls. In the end, she piled people into her car and drove them to the hospital, then collected enough blood to save the mother and her babies. Other stories ended tragically, and Mary found herself learning from local people. After a mother and her baby died, the woman's husband told Mary, "That's God's business." Mary realized that "he was comforting me."

For 17 years, Mary remained a nun. She practiced midwifery in Africa, Asia and the United States and earned an advanced degree that allowed her to teach maternal and newborn care to nurses in rural areas. Then in the 1980s, her life changed. She had returned to America to care for her aging parents, and she met Maurice Cunningham, an Irish-born social worker and former priest. The two became good friends and eventually decided to marry. "This is like a birth," Maurice told Mary. As a nun, she says, "You live a deep life and you share, but I wanted to share with one person who would know me inside and out." In 1992, Mary left her order and married Maurice. Six years later, the couple moved to Wilmington.

Mary and I have met at the Latin American restaurant San Juan Café, which she and Maurice consider a favorite. We start with tostones de San Juan, slices of fried green plantain piled with two different combinations of seafood—chopped caper-studded tuna tartar on some and hot pink caviar with cilantro-lime crema on the others. It looks like a luxurious alternative to nachos and tastes decadent, too. Mary says, "I'd like a glass of wine to go with it."

Fried plantains are staples of Latin American and Caribbean cuisines. Green ones, twice fried and smashed, become the firm, slightly bland tostones, while riper ones turn into sweet maduros. We eat maduros with a

pressed Cubano, that classic sandwich of roast pork, ham, sour pickles and Swiss cheese. Maduros also accompany our Lechon Asado, which is pork, marinated for two days and slow-roasted, then served with red beans and rice. Consider it a Puerto Rican meat-and-three.

Here in Wilmington, Mary spent seven years as a midwife at New Hanover Regional Medical Center. She founded the local practice with Maria Sienkiwich and Jan Moses, but for a time she ran it by herself. "I knew the women so well," she says, that "it made their births so much easier. I knew what to do for their pain."

Not long after their marriage, Mary and Maurice left the Catholic Church, and they no longer follow any organized religion. Her idea of spirituality is "more African: God is in everything. And everyone." Still, she says, "The Catholic Church is dear to my heart. The sisters gave me so much toward a full life." And her years as a nun formed the philosophical underpinning for her medical practice: "You tell me your truth and I listen, then I tell you my truth and you listen. And something new is born from that."

By the end of lunch, I'm no longer questioning how Mary describes her role as a midwife. Her choice of verb doesn't minimize her work. Rather, it emphasizes a fundamental principle of her career — to value the primary role of women in giving birth.

So, I only hesitate a little when I ask Mary, "How many babies have you caught over the course of your career?"

And she grins widely. "Oh, thousands," she says. "I gave up counting."

San Juan Café is located at 3314 Wrightsville Ave. For more information, call (910) 790-8661 or visit www.sanjuancafenc.com.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

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Fried Green Tomatoes

A childhood treat, a grown-up delight

By Jason Frye

Early on in

The Last Ballad, Wiley Cash's new novel set in Bessemer City, North Carolina, a mill boss abandons his lunch to, rather unkindly, ask an employee why she's been missing shifts. Intimidated, she averts her gaze from the boss's eyes and focuses on his desk. There, a "ledger and ink pen; a small wooden globe with etchings too faded to read; an empty mug; a half eaten sandwich of some kind." It's that sandwich that makes the moment real to me because Cash's description allows room for my imagination to live in the space between his words. I can picture that sandwich: waxed paper folded back just so, an even row of bites taken across the top, tomato — green and fried, because the book takes place in May and it's too early for a red tomato and, besides, the boss could afford a hot-house green — and a little smear of mayo.

I grew up with fried green tomatoes. In sandwiches. As sides. At church potlucks and at my grandmother's house. I learned to cook them early, showed how by my mother, my grandmother, and our neighbor Victoria Ferrell. Like Ella, one of Cash's protagonists, I grew up in the shadow of the union; mine West Virginia's United Mine Workers, strong and many-membered; hers, fledgling and threatened in the nest. But still, it's that sandwich that I find intriguing.

The other book I'm reading is a cookbook from one of my favorite Asheville restaurants, Biscuit Head. They make biscuits, but not just any biscuits, cathead biscuits (so named because these beauties are the size of a tomcat's head). There's room for me in the recipes and anecdotes here too, and on the same day I found Ella staring at that sandwich, I came across a recipe for fried green tomatoes and chèvre dressing in *Biscuit Head: New Southern Biscuits, Breakfast, and Brunch*.

Maybe the cookbook pulled tight the thread between memory, imagination and Cash's world. Maybe I was just hungry. No matter the reason, I thought of that sandwich, of learning to fry tomatoes in a cast-iron skillet, of how good that goat cheese dressing would be, and decided it was time to make a batch.

The recipe's easy and I won't bore you with the details, but there's room in it for you. It goes like this. Slice your green tomatoes about 1/4-inch thick; dredge them in flour, dip in egg and buttermilk, coat with cornmeal; fry till golden on one side, flip and fry to finish. The chèvre dressing is easy too: chèvre, Duke's mayonnaise, yogurt, lemon juice, spices mixed up and spooned over the top.

I ate my fried green tomatoes on a plate with a little arugula, a far cry from how we ate it growing up, and a further cry from Cash's villainous mill boss, but spot on for New Southern. That first bite transported me — as did *The Last Ballad*, as did *Biscuit Head* — to my grandmother's stove, to Victoria's kitchen, to my grandfather eating a tomato sandwich in the shaded summer heat of his porch.

That's what good food does, what good writing does, what good art does: It carries us away, into our past or to another place altogether, but it always leaves room for us to be and grow.

Wiley Cash, *The Last Ballad* (HarperCollins, 2017)
Jason & Carolyn Roy, *Biscuit Head: New Southern Biscuits, Breakfasts, and Brunch* (Voyageur Press, 2016)

Jason Frye is a regular Salt *contributor. Keep track of where and what he eats by following him on Instagram: @beardedwriter.*

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Drink Naked

The unoaked revolution

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN GESSNER

By Robyn James

When ancient Rome first started making wine, their preferred vessels were clay pots. Breakage during shipping became a problem, and they experimented using big wooden barrels and vats. Not only was this a sturdier method, but they discovered that the porous wood imparted some favorable qualities to the wine, and it also allowed it to age gracefully.

It became particularly popular to use oak influence on the noble grape, chardonnay, and by the 1990s winemakers were making the heavy, oaky, buttered-toast, style that in many cases was used to mask inferior fruit. Some wineries, in an effort to save money, would just dump oak chips into cheap chardonnay, stir it up and soak it, then filter them out.

Although it is the most widely planted white grape in the U.S., Europe, Australia and South America, consumers revolted and adopted the battle cry of ABC — "Anything But Chardonnay." Winemakers listened and the movement began to improve the quality of chardonnay fruit and back off on the oak influence. The always-irreverent Australian winemakers coined the phrase "Drinking Naked" for chardonnay minus oak.

This past decade efforts have been made to produce chardonnay that is balanced between fruit and acidity. Planting in cooler areas and giving the grapes less hang time produce crisper, more refreshing versions of this versatile grape.

All wines go through a primary fermentation that converts the sugars into alcohol, but winemakers have the option of inducing or spontaneously allowing the wine to go through a secondary, malolactic fermentation. Tart tasting, green apple-like, malic acid is naturally present in wine, and this process turns it into lactic acid, the same acid in butter. Thus the wine takes on a richer, creamy, buttery character.

Kim Crawford Unoaked Chardonnay from New Zealand is a tasty example of this process. Their fruit comes from vineyards in Marlborough and Hawke's Bay, where the canopies of the vines are managed to allow the fruit to ripen slowly. Completely devoid of oak, this chardonnay has gone through malolactic fermentation, and the winery describes their wine as "ripe tropical fruit — pineapple and ripe melon — with hints of butterscotch. Shows great length uncluttered by oak. Secondary malolactic fermentation gives nuttiness and generous mouthfeel." You can usually find this gem in the market for around $16.

Louis Jadot, one of Burgundy's largest producers, makes a delicious chardonnay from the Maconnais region cleverly branded "Steel Chardonnay" that sells for about $17. Like Crawford's chardonnay, this wine is completely unoaked, aged in steel vats. But, unlike Crawford's, it does not go through any part of malolactic fermentation. Described by the winery as having "high toned aromas of citrus, mandarin orange, white flower, pear and apple, with flinty minerality. Retains a fresh, crisp character." A perfect match for summertime fish and shellfish dishes.

The Donati Estate, the only winery located in the Paicines wine-growing region of California, produces a tasty unoaked chardonnay for about $13. Branded "Sisters Forever" by winemaker Briana Heywood, this sustainably farmed wine is a tribute to women.

Winery tasting notes claim that the wine has "tropical aromas of melon, pineapple, banana and apricot. Lush mouthfeel with crisp and marvelous acidity on the finish."

These wines are prefect warm weather selections, so go ahead — drink naked!

Robyn James is a certified sommelier and proprietor of The Wine Cellar and Tasting Room in Southern Pines. Contact her at robynajames@gmail.com.

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The Daiquiri

And the way to perfect it with myriad rums

By Tony Cross

The next time you're in an establishment and you're uncertain if the drinks on their cocktail list are any good or not, order a daiquiri. If you're envisioning a syrupy, strawberry-colored frozen drink that comes in a 16-ounce piña colada glass, keep reading. To make a classic daiquiri, all you need is rum, lime juice and sugar. But like many other pre-Prohibition cocktails, the daiquiri was ruined in the '70s with artificial everything. When made correctly, this cocktail is the epitome of balance: not too boozy, not too tart, and not too sweet. Chances are, if the bartender can make a good daiquiri, the other cocktails on the list will also be balanced. I've had guests request a daiquiri for this very reason, and it resulted in their group ordering a few other cocktails throughout the evening.

I tried this gambit out a few years back on a hot summer afternoon. The bartender took my order, only to return a few minutes later to ask if I "wanted that blended." I opted for the sauvignon blanc instead. Here are a few of my favorite rums that I'll be making daiquiris with and kicking back during the hottest month of the summer.

Flor de Caña Extra Seco 4 Years

Cocktail historian David Wondrich calls the daiquiri "the first true classic cocktail to be invented outside the United States." He's right, and like so many classic cocktails that I've researched, many bartenders from the past have taken credit for their creation. Wondrich found the daiquiri referred to as the "Cuban Cocktail" in a cocktail book from Hugo Ensslin called *Recipes For Mixed Drinks* published in 1916. However, in a later edition of the book, Ensslin corrects himself, giving credit to Jacques Straub for publishing the cocktail in 1914. What we do know is that the original was made with Bacardi rum. Bacardi in the early 1900s was different from the Bacardi we know today. Back then it was rich and "exceptionally smooth." Today, it's very light, with not much flavor. Instead, grab a bottle of Flor de Caña Extra Seco 4 Years. Based in Nicaragua, this distillery — meaning "Flower of the Cane" — has been around since 1890. The sugar cane was planted at the foot of a volcano in hopes that the soil would enrich the flavors of the rum, and the humidity would naturally age it once it was in oak barrels. Flor de Caña makes a lot of different aged rums: four year, five year, seven year, 12 year, 18 year, and a 25 year. This is the best go-to rum for making a classic daiquiri without hurting your pocket: less than $20 a bottle.

Classic Daiquiri

2 ounces Flor de Caña Extra Seco 4 Years
3/4 ounce fresh lime juice
1/2 ounce simple syrup (2:1)

Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice, and shake vigorously until the shaker is very cold. Strain into a chilled cocktail coupe glass. No garnish.

Fair Game Beverage Company's Amber Rum

A few years back, Fair Game distiller Chris Jude released a sorghum rum titled "No'Lasses." It was delicious and different: great rum characteristics, but with a whiskey backbone. Last year, he released his Amber Rum. He sources his panela sugar from Colombia. Panela sugar is made from evaporated cane juice; it's a raw sugar with rich flavors. This sugar gives the rum a sweet, floral and grassy profile. Like the No'Lasses, it's also aged in bourbon barrels after distillation in Jude's alembic pot still. The sugar ferments very slowly with Caribbean rum yeast before being added to the still. If you're looking for a daiquiri with more body and flavor, use this rum. You can use it with the same specs from the daiquiri recipe above or when making a Hemmingway, named for the author, of course. Legend has it, at the El Floridita bar in Havana, Hemmingway set a house record for drinking 16 doubles (sans the sugar — that alone would've probably killed him).

Hemmingway Daiquiri

2 ounces Fair Game Amber Rum
3/4 ounce fresh lime juice

PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY CROSS

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1/2 ounce fresh grapefruit juice
Bar spoon maraschino liqueur
Bar spoon simple syrup (2:1)
Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice, and shake vigorously until the shaker is very cold. Strain into a chilled cocktail coupe glass. No garnish.

Smith & Cross Traditional Jamaican Rum

My favorite rum. Ever. There are so many great things to say about this funky rum. Funky as in all kinds of flavor — on the nose it smells like a Werther's caramel drop and on the palate there are ripe bananas, nuttiness and spice, undertones of grass, oak and honey. Coming in at a whopping 57 percent ABV, this is my definition of pirate rum. Titled "Navy Strength," it must be at least 100 proof, which was the traditional strength requirement of the British Navy.

Smith & Cross is one of the oldest producers of spirits and sugar in England. Dating back to 1788, the sugar refinery was located on the London docks. As time passed, the refineries turned into rum cellars. Haus Alpenz, the distributor of Smith & Cross, says, "At this proof a spill of the spirits would not prevent gunpowder from igniting. As important, this degree of concentration provided an efficiency in conveyance on board and onward to trading partners far away." This rum is bottled in London, and made with a combo of the Wedderburn and Plummer styles of rum producing. The Wedderburn style is aged for less than a year, and the Plummer is aged one to three years in white oak. Molasses, skimmings (the debris that collects on the top of the boiling fluids, skimmed off during molasses and sugar production), cane juice, the syrup bottoms from sugar production, and the dunder (the liquid left in the boiler after distilling rum) make this rum my favorite; it's not just because we share the same name.

Here's my recipe for a daiquri. This has got to be one of my favorite cocktails to drink. The half ounce of Smith & Cross does wonders for this quick sipper.

Cross Daiquiri

1 1/2 ounces Flor de Caña Extra Seco
1/2 ounce Smith & Cross Jamaican Rum
3/4 ounce fresh lime juice
1/2 ounce simple syrup (2:1)
Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice from distilled water, and shake vigorously until the shaker is very cold. Strain into a chilled cocktail coupe glass. No garnish.

Tony Cross is a bartender who runs cocktail catering company Reverie Cocktails *in Southern Pines.*

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The Big Picture

Old friends, old metal, and both will be fine

By Jason Mott

I only ever saw him in passing: a car pulling in and out of a driveway, a silhouette cast against a low-slung sun as I pulled into my driveway at the end of the day. He was a ghost that lived next door, the ghost of the childhood we once shared.

His name is . . .

Well, I'll keep his name to myself. The important thing to know is that we grew up together. We were only a year apart and he lived across the road from me. If my mother were still alive she could — and most certainly would — recount the complicated country lineage by which he and I were, eventually, cousins.

So throughout our childhoods we were both cousins and friends. We went fishing together, we explored the logging forest and web of logging roads behind our houses together. When we were teenagers he wanted to learn to cut hair, and my shaggy head was his first foray into the craft. It was a horrible outcome, of course. But it got better. After a few months he was one of the best barbers in town and my haircuts were always free.

Fast-forward to adulthood and, for a while, we were still good friends. He moved to a neighboring town and made a life as a barber. My haircuts were still free. When we saw each other we talked about the trinity of 20-something discussion topics: women, cars and music.

Fast-forward another few years and, as suddenly as it can only happen in retrospect, everything changed. I heard he got diagnosed with diabetes. The next time I saw him he was as thin as a rail and chain smoking like the old furnace my father used to heat our home once upon a time. He spent some time in the hospital — I can't remember exactly why, other than to say that it was related to the diabetes. When he got out of the hospital I asked him how he was doing and, just as he'd said about anything else in life, he allowed, "I'm fine."

But things weren't really fine. And they wouldn't be for a long time. In fact, maybe never again.

Which brings us to now.

He waved me down about a week after I got my vintage Mustang. I was outside in the garage tinkering with it and heard a voice calling from the distance. A few moments later he was standing in front of me, even thinner than I remembered, pointing at my new car and saying, "Man . . . you've really got something here."

We talked for maybe an hour about the car. Longer than he and I had talked for years. He was excited about it, as if it were his own. I hadn't heard him laugh since we were in our 20s and it sounded good. It reminded me of simpler days.

Somewhere along the way we got into a discussion about rust. Rust is a very bad thing for cars. Rust spreads and eats away at things. I was concerned about a thick layer of Bondo I had found on the rear of the car. If you're not into cars, the thing to know about Bondo is that it's always used to cover up something. It's the Wonderbra of automotive body repair.

But let's be clear: I was still happy with the old car I had purchased, but I was also beginning to understand that it was going to be more work than I first thought . . . which is a lesson about life itself, in my opinion.

My friend went out of his way to convince me that the Bondo wasn't anything to worry about. "Man," he said, "that's nothing. I guarantee it. It'll be fine." On and on he went, repeating that word again and again whenever I brought up any concern: ". . . fine . . . fine . . . fine." Everything

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would be fine in his opinion and, in spite of myself, I began to believe him. Everything would be fine. Maybe it would require a few more hours of work than expected. At worst, it would take more money. But in the Big Picture of things, that's nothing to be worried about.

That's all fine.

And then my friend said goodbye and walked home again.

A few days later his mother came over for a visit. She said she'd heard about my car from her son and she wanted to see it for herself. As with him, I hadn't talked to her in years. We caught up for a while. We exchanged a few memories about my dead mother. We talked about my car. Then she talked about her son.

He was sicker than I knew. Diabetes, bone issues, liver issues, dialysis. "A few months back," she said, "I expected to go into his bedroom and find him dead. I was afraid to come home some nights."

I didn't know what to say to her, so I told her that everything would be "fine." It was the only word I could think of. It was a piece of her son that I could suddenly give back to her and, to my surprise, it worked. She smiled a wide, toothy, familiar smile that stained my childhood and she laughed and agreed with me and, before long, she went home — promising not to visit again soon.

Then I was alone in my garage with my old car and I stood for a while and stared at their house and tried to convince myself that everything really would be fine. The Bondo would come off easily, the rust would be repaired, my friend would beat the diabetes, get a kidney transplant, his mother wouldn't find him dead.

Everything will be fine.

Or maybe it won't.

The thing about it is, I have to believe it. I have to believe that objects in this world can be fixed, that we can be fixed. It's our willingness to believe in things being fixed that makes us get out of bed in the morning, seek love and find laughter, have children, form friendships, or even just buy old cars and scrape away the paint to find them ailing and, still, not give up on them.

I once heard someone say that hope is irrational.

Well, it is. But so is life.

And maybe we should fight as hard for hope as we do for life.

My old car, my old friend. In the Big Picture, both are going to be fine.

Jason Mott is a New York Times *best-selling author, a UNCW alumnus and current UNCW writer-in-residence.*

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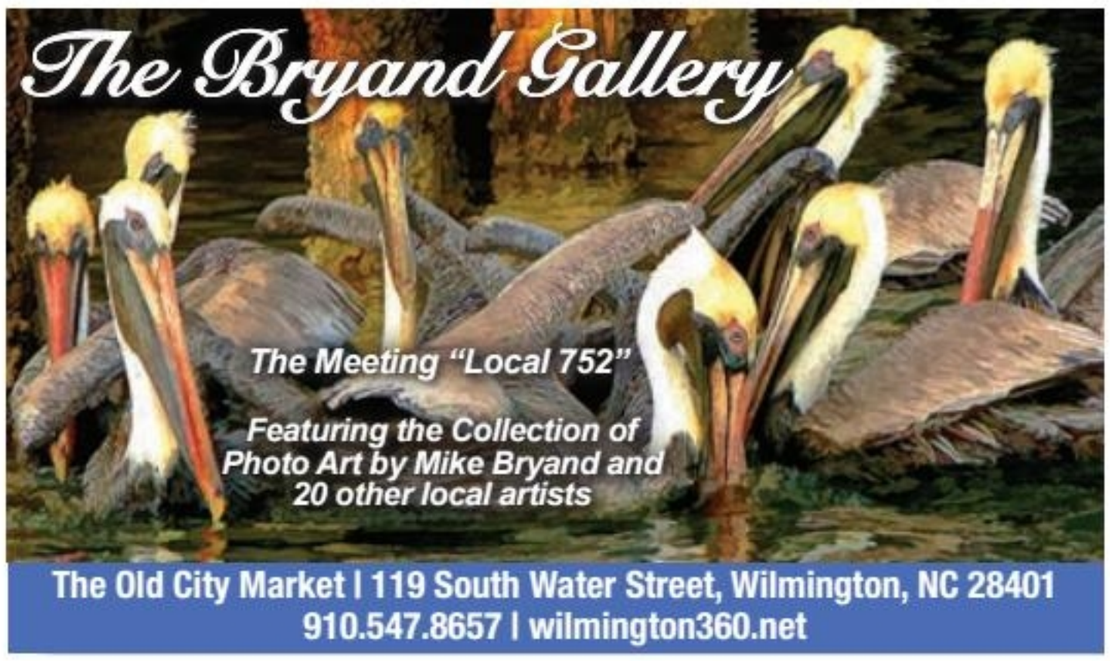
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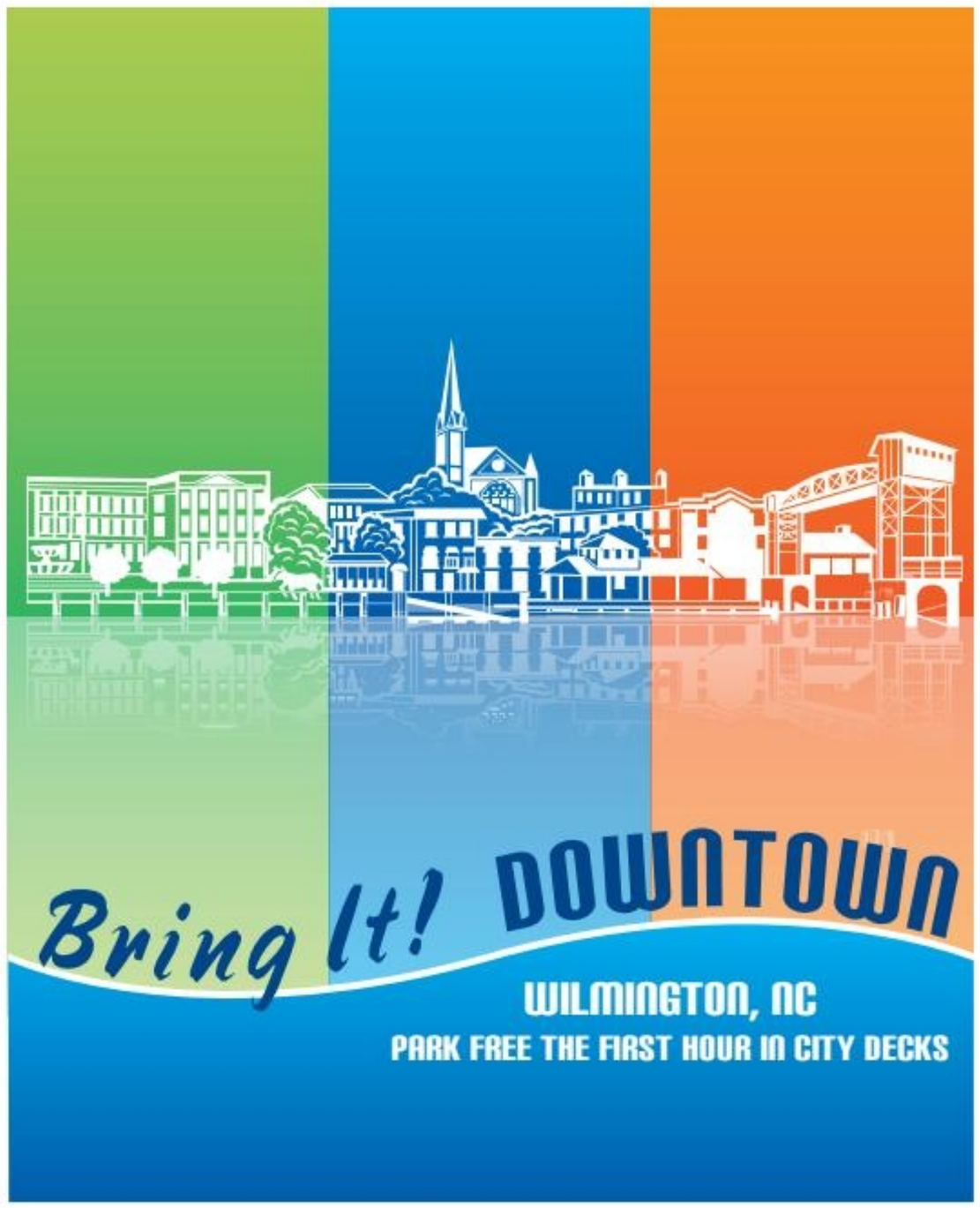

Swallow-Tailed Kite

The most unmistakable bird in our state is a natural enemy of wasps

By Susan Campbell

The swallow-tailed kite is, without a doubt, the most unmistakable of birds in our state — and perhaps anywhere in the world. This large raptor with a long, forked tail is capable of endless, highly acrobatic flight. The size as well as long, narrow wings may cause one to think "osprey" at first, but one glimpse of that unique tail gives its true identity away, even at a great distance. This majestic bird is black on top with a white head and belly as well as white wing linings. As with all kite species, the bill is stout and heavily curved, but the legs and feet, instead of being yellow, are a grayish hue.

It has only been in the last decade that this magnificent species has become a regular in the summer months in certain locations of southeastern North Carolina. Individuals were seen mixed in with Mississippi kites along the Cape Fear River in the summer of 2003. In 2008 a pair of kites seemed to be defending a territory along the river, but no concrete evidence of breeding could be found. Swallow-tailed kites were finally confirmed as a new breeder here when a nesting pair was located during an aerial survey by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission in May 2013. Far more likely to be seen in coastal South Carolina and farther south, these birds have plenty of feeding habitat here as well as tall trees to use for nesting. Their numbers are bound to increase in the years ahead.

Swallow-taileds are found in wet coastal habitat where their preferred prey, large flying insects, is abundant. Adults feed entirely on the wing. But when foraging for young this bird is so agile that it not only preys on bugs such as dragonflies and beetles, but readily snatches snakes, lizards and even nestlings of other species from the canopy. Swallow-taileds are not at all choosey. Males forage for a good deal of the food for the growing family. He will carry food items back to the nest in his talons, transfer to it to his bill and carefully pass it to his mate, who will tear it into pieces and feed them to their young.

This species is a loosely communal breeder like its cousin the Misissippi kite. Swallow-tailed pairs can be found in adjacent treetops when they find a particularly good piece of habitat. Non-breeding males may also associate with established pairs. These individuals may bring gifts of sticks and even food to breeding females, but interestingly, these offerings usually go ignored.

Swallow-taileds have been found to consume a large number of highly venomous insects. Wasps and hornets are not uncommon food items, as are fire ants. This is possibly due to the fact that they have developed a much fleshier stomach than other birds. Interestingly, an adult kite may bring an entire wasp nests to its own nests and, after consuming the larvae, will incorporate it into its nest. The motivation for doing so is still unclear.

An important note is that in late summer, individual swallow-tailed kites can be seen almost anywhere in the state as a result of post-breeding dispersal. They may mix in with feeding or loafing Mississippi kites around agricultural fields or bottomland forest. Last July, I was fortunate enough to spot a soaring individual over Highway 421 adjacent to swampy habitat outside Siler City (Chatham County). Should you too spot one of these magnificent birds, consider yourself very lucky!

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos at susan@ncaves.com.

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Wild Words

I'll not read poetry at bedtime anymore –
those wild words gang up,
go roaming in my head,
jump synapses, gathering speed,
picking up more of their kind,
bringing little phrases
to the threshold of my sleep
like proud cats leaving
mice on a doorstep.
Some I shoo away,
but others will not let me rest
till they finally shake me awake,
and with pen scratching sleepily
on the back of a store receipt,
I quickly let them out.

– *Laura Lomax*

Mani
/Pedi
Fiction by Lee Smith

I come here to be touched. I want the lotion, the rubbing, the smoothing, the stroking, the pressing, the kneading fingers, the touch on my toes and feet and legs and hands and shoulders. Oh and I always get the neck massage, too, in addition to the deluxe manicure and the hot stone pedicure and the warm wax treatment on both feet and hands. I especially love the moment when each hand or foot slides into its own plastic bag filled with that melted wax, you think it's too hot and you can't stand it, but you can. And I especially love Kim, a round sweet Filipino woman, the salon owner's wife, who is doing me today, both for her wonderful plump firm hands and also her strength as she goes deep, deep into the tight muscles of my calves and neck. If I can't get Kim, I ask for Rosa, thin, tense, and angry, or Luis, a gentle, beautiful young man who seems wistful or sad to me though who knows if that is true or not. None of these people speak English beyond the most rudimentary and necessary terms such as "Mani-pedi too-too?" or "Hot-hot?" as I put my feet into the tub, or "You like?" as Kim asks now, massaging my calves, then "Feel so good!" with a nice big smile as she brings the hot towel to cover my knees and lower legs and feet. This is heaven. I smile, too. I love it that we can't really communicate. I'm not here to talk, I'm here to be touched.

Since Charlie died, many people have actually come up to me and said, "Well, it's a blessing, isn't it, after all this time," or "It's so sad, but it must be a relief, too." The fact is, it is not a blessing, and it is not a relief, either. So what if Charlie couldn't speak to me for the last four years? He knew me, I'm sure of that. The body has its own way of knowing, bone to bone, skin to skin. I believe it comforted him when I touched him or turned him so that we lay curled together side to side like spoons in a drawer, flesh to flesh as in our long life together, two old high school teachers, married for 45 years. The body has a knowledge of its own, this is why I kept him at home and I don't care what anybody thought of that, my son or his wife or the hospice people or anybody.

So now? I don't miss Charlie himself, he'd been gone for years. But I do miss his body, his flesh, the feel of him, the touching. So I come here. I come way too often, I know, especially considering that I don't really have any nails to speak of, I never have. I come too often and I stay too long.

But so does this other woman, also older, like myself, a blowsy, disheveled blonde who occupies the other pedicure chair in this secluded back alcove. I've seen her here several times. Today, she has already had her manicure; she waves her hands through the perfumed air, then holds them up to admire her perfect nails, tapered hot pink points, while her feet and ankles soak in the hot tub.

This is a reversal of the standard routine. Usually the pedicure is first, then the manicure while the toenails are drying under the special light at one of the nail stations. I love that special light, so warm on my feet, I love the tiny fan on my fingernails. I tip extravagantly when I leave.

"They already told me I can just soak as long as I want," this woman suddenly leans forward to tell me, sounding defensive.

What a surprise, a real jolt! I have never talked to any other customer here in The Purple Orchid in this rundown strip mall out on the highway north of town, far from my own staid neighborhood and all my regular haunts. I can't think what to say.

"I'm having a real bad day," she goes on, leaning forward, "but I swear, it always calms me down to come in for a mani/pedi. Kim sweetie, could you come over here and jack up the heat for me, hon? Hot-hot please-please!" she calls, and Kim leaves my chair to go over to her. "Just a little bit more, yes-yes hot-hot, that's good, that's good hon, that's perfect! Thank you, sweetie."

Kim comes back to me and the other woman settles back in her chair. She was beautiful once, I can see that, about 40 years and 40 pounds ago, in a beauty queen sort of way. In fact she was a beauty queen, I'm sure of it, Miss This or Miss That, back in the day, which was my day, too, of course. But I was not a beauty queen or a cheerleader or a majorette. No, I was in the Beta Club, and the French club, and the band. Flute. This woman's hair is still fairly full and too long for her age, almost big hair. Hers is not the practiced smile of the professional beauty contestant, though, but an engaging, lopsided grin.

"I tell you what," she says, looking straight at me, "I really do need to calm down today. I need to focus. I've got to get myself together."

"Well, me too," I hear myself saying. Maybe this is true.

Kim takes off the hot towel now and massages my feet, rubbing lotion between each toe, buffing that recalcitrant callus with a pumice stone, then trimming my toenails, first one foot, then the other.

"Yeah, I've seen you in here before," the blonde says. "My name is Sandy Neighbors, honey, and my husband is Manly Neighbors, that's the one that does everybody's taxes in this whole town, you may have seen his billboards, he's got them up everyplace, there's one right near here where Church Street runs into Route 60. Manly Neighbors, he's got a red tie and a great big old shit-eating grin."

I start laughing, I can't help it, I have seen that guy on that billboard, and

she's right. I haven't laughed in so long it hurts.

"Yeah, he's real busy right now," Sandy says. "It's tax season, you know" — it's April — "so Mr. Manly Neighbors, Mr. Important, Mr. Big, he just can't do a goddamn thing with his wife, he's so busy, he's a workaholic anyhow, even at the best of times. I think that's what happens when you grow up poor, you know, you just can't ever make too much money, you can't believe it's real somehow. Him and his mom used to eat the old bread that the Mick or Mack grocery store was throwing out, that's how poor they was, so I guess we just can't imagine."

I really don't know what to say to that, which doesn't matter anyway as Sandy Neighbors just goes right on talking while Kim trims my nails and then expertly applies the polish on my toenails, Tijuana Holiday, something new for me, I picked it for the first time today, usually I choose something more subdued such as Dawn Blush which is almost mauve. But who cares? What does it matter?

"Ooh, I just love that red," Sandy Neighbors says. "And you've got the prettiest feet, too!"

I have never been told this before.

"You look real good, honey," Sandy pronounces now, while leaning way over the side of her pedicure chair to haul up an enormous sequined tote bag which she begins rummaging around in, finally pulling out a bottle of Mike's Hard Lemonade which I know to be the real stuff that they sell at the liquor store and at the convenience store up the highway where I go to buy my cigarettes, Salems, which I have started smoking again now after quitting for 30 years, nobody knows it though, I don't do it in public ever, just mostly in the car out on the Interstate or out on the bedroom balcony late at night when I just can't sleep. Now Sandy is all bent over feeling around in the tote bag again, emerging finally with a flushed face and one of those old churchkey openers that I haven't seen in years.

"Ta-da!" she pops off the top, throws her head back, and takes a big pull on the bottle then grins at me. "This here is my special lemonade," she says. "It calms me down real good." She takes another swig, looks all around as if for spies, then leans across to say to me confidentially, "Actually I'm just going to set over here a while and drink some of my lemonade and try to pass this, this kidney stone that's just about to bother me to death."

I was nonplussed. "Can you just *do* that?" I ask. "Just like that? I mean, pass a kidney stone just because you *want* to?"

"Well, I don't know," she says. "Stick around and we'll see. But I read in a magazine that citrus is real helpful. And this lemonade is pretty damn good, too. You want to try some?"

"Sure," I say, and she pops the top of another one and leans way across the pink carpet so I can reach out and get it. I take a big swallow. This stuff is wonderful.

"So what do you think?" she asks. "Pretty good, huh? I think it's relaxing, too. In fact, I'm getting real relaxed already."

"I can see that," I say, settling back, taking another long pull on this longneck bottle, which amuses me, the wordplay, I mean, "long pull" and "longneck." I used to be a poet in my youth. "I'm getting pretty relaxed myself." I take another drink. "So, what's happening over there? Any progress with that kidney stone?" I ask, while a part of me seems to have levitated to the ceiling where I hover over us both, me and Sandy Neighbors in our pretty pink alcove which looks like the inside of a seashell, I think suddenly, one of those big curly conch shells that you can blow into.

"Well, I don't know," Sandy says, "I can't tell yet. But I'd really like to go ahead and pass it so I can go on this Senior Water Aerobics Club trip tomorrow. I sure don't want to pass it while we're all on the bus. And I've already paid for the trip."

"But where are you going?" I ask, thinking of nearby bodies of water: Kerr Lake, Jordan Lake . . .

"Oh honey, we're not going *swimming!* Lord, it's way too cold for that!" Sandy laughs at my stupidity. "No, honey, we're going to Savannah on a big fancy bus, it's a scenic tour kind of thing. Of course I've already been to Savannah one time with Manly" — she rolls her eyes — "we had a free trip we won at a Rotary Club raffle. But *this* trip will be completely different, a girl thing, so it'll be lots more fun. They've got a bar about every 20 feet in Savannah, plus all this old architecture and culture and shit, and low country cooking, that's what they call it down there, 'the low country.'"

"I've heard that," I say.

"Hey, you know what? You ought to come along with us!" Sandy cries.

I drain my lemonade, trying to imagine this. Maybe I look doubtful, because she adds, "Without the husbands, you know, why we'll just have the best time in the world. So you can leave yours at home too."

"I would," I say, "but you know, this is kind of short notice."

She gets out two more longnecks, pops the tops, and hands one over. "Well, even if you can't make this trip, you ought to join our water aerobics club anyhow, we have a lot of fun in there, splashing around and gossiping. Plus it's real good for your arthritis and balance and everything."

This is exactly the kind of suggestion my daughter-in-law and my sister keep making all the time.

"When do you meet?" I ask in spite of myself.

"Ten o'clock Tuesday and Thursday mornings," she says, "in the pool at the Orange County Recreation Center."

I shake my head. "I'm a poet," I say. "That's when I work."

"Work?" Sandy snorts. "I thought you said you was a poet."

"I mean, that's when I write," I say, firmly now, convinced of it.

"Well, why don't you write some other time, then?" Sandy asks with a big shit-eating grin. "You ought to come. You'd just love us!"

"Maybe I will," I say, just as Sandy grabs both arms of her pedi chair and starts yelling. "Oh oh! Oh my God! Watch out! It's happening! It's coming! It's coming right now!" she shrieks, hanging on for dear life.

Lee Smith, who resides in Hillsborough, is the award-winning author of 13 novels and four short story collections and a beautiful memoir of growing up in rural Virginia called Dimestore, *published in March of 2016 by Algonquin Books. She is one of the brightest lights of American fiction, a true gift to the Old North State, and an old friend of this magazine.*

Your Husband Is Cheating on Us

Fiction by Jill McCorkle

Your husband is cheating on us. I'm assuming that he hasn't told you yet. I'm the test wife and he tries everything out on me first, I mean *everything*. Remember when he got hooked on that massage oil that heats up with body temp? Now maybe you liked it, but I sure didn't. I got a rash, but of course, I have extremely sensitive skin and always have. I mean, I am Clinique all the way. If you were writing up this triangle (fast becoming a rectangle), then *you'd* be the one with sensitive skin, the fair, hothouse flower, and I'd be the scrub grass by the side of the road.

And look at you — some tan. I know that you go to Total Skin Care and get in the sunning beds. It's odd how he tells me all about you. There have been many times when I've said, well, why don't you just go on home then? And of course, that's the ironic part, because he always does. But, girl, like are you thick? I would *know* if my man had been out messing around. Like I know your perfume — Chloé — and the fact that you have not picked up on my Shalimar is amazing. I wear the stuff the way it's supposed to be worn — heavy; I'm one of those women people ask not to be seated next to on the airplane. At my last clerical job they ran a ban on perfume in the workplace after I'd been there a week, so I had to quit on principle. That's me, a quitter; a principled quitter. When the going gets tough I get the hell out, always have.

I've come here today with a proposition for you, but before I get into that, I thought you might like to hear a bit about me. I'd think you'd want to, given that I know everything there is to know about you. I know your mama died last January, and I have to tell you that I almost called you up to give my condolences. I mean, I'd been hearing about how awful her illness was and how you were traveling back and forth to tend to her. I heard you on the answering machine many times when I'd be over here cooking dinner. I've got to tell you that I just love your kitchen — that commercial-size stove and those marble countertops. Was he feeling guilty when you all remodeled, or what? You and I both have excellent and very similar tastes. Don't look at my hair. It's not a good day. You should see me when it's just cut and blown dry. Maybe I can show you some time.

Anyway, one of those nights when I heard you on the machine, you were crying so hard that I almost picked up, so strong was my urge to want to comfort you. When Mr. Big got home, I told him there was a message I felt he had to listen to right that minute, and of course, he did, but then did he call you? No, ma'am. And did he call to check on your son, who he had dumped off at the Anderson house and them not even home from work yet? I told him that if I had a son I believe I'd be more responsible with him, and he just pawed the air like I might be dumb. He must do that to you a lot, too. I'm sure he must. I even suggested I excuse myself, go to the mall or something so he could have his privacy but he just waved again and shrugged, like, nayyhh. Well, that was the first time I stopped and asked myself just who in the hell was this man I was sharing my (or *your*) bed with? I looked at him in a completely different way after that. I mean, how could he hear you sobbing and carrying on like that and not rush to call you? I see your surprise and I'm sorry. We all grow up and find out that the truth hurts. But here's some truth you might like. I did *not* sleep with him in your bed that night. I faked myself a migraine (complete with blinding aura) and made him drive me straight home. Do you think *he* ever looked all around to make sure your neighbors weren't looking? Hell, no. Either too stupid or just didn't give a damn, I can't figure which. I moaned and groaned and talked of the bright lights I was seeing out of my right eye (I told him the left had already shut out in complete blindness), and honey, he drove faster than the speed limit. I have always noticed how men (at least the ones I've come into contact with) can't stand to observe pain. It just sends them right up a tree. I have also faked menstrual cramps with Mr. Big on several occasions, and so I know in great detail (he talks a hell of a lot, doesn't he?) that you have just terrible periods and always have. My bet is that you've faked your share, am I right? Well, either way, I know how you sometimes ask him to crush up some Valium into some juice

that you sip through a straw so you don't have to sit up and straighten yourself out. Genius. Make that Mr. Big Ass work! But honey, I'm not so sure I'd trust him, you know? If I were you I might mix my own cocktails.

But enough about that, I wanted to tell you about me. Get yourself a drink if you like, or a cigarette. I know you smoke. He knows you smoke, even though you think he doesn't. I mean, the man is slow for sure, but he isn't completely out of the loop. He has smelled it in your hair, even though he says you spray lots of hairspray and perfume (he doesn't know you wear Chloé — I do). So come on out in the open and just smoke. I smoked for years and I absolutely loved it. But I quit years ago. I am actually one of those who quit because of Yul Brynner coming on television and saying that, when I saw him there doing that ad, then it meant he was dead. Lord. That was a moving experience. I was holding a cigarette in my hand and was seven months pregnant (yes I have had a life, too), and I felt like Yul was looking directly into my eyes. Talk about an aura. Yul had an aura, and don't be like Mr. Big and make a joke about his baldness. I felt his soul reach out and grab me by the throat and say, *Put out the butt.* I went out on my back stoop, took one final drag (a long, delicious drag), and then I thumped that butt clean across the darkened backyard where it twinkled and glowed for just a brief second before dying.

If I was somebody who could like have one cookie at a time or could eat the designated portion written at the top of the recipe or on the side of the box, then I'd ask you to give me a cigarette, but we know better. If I had one cigarette, I'd have a carton. I have always told people that if I was ever given the bad news that my number had been drawn in that great bingo game we call fate and I only had a little bit of time left, that I'd get me a cooler of beer and a carton of cigarettes and several bottles of Hawaiian Tropic (the oil with the red label for tropical-looking people), a tape deck with all my favorites from when I was teenager: Pet Clark and Chad and Jeremy, you know my time, I'm a few years older than you, I think. And I'd just stretch out and offer myself to the sun; a burnt offering. Burnt, greased, and buzzing like a bee.

The baby? You're asking about *my* baby? Well, let's just say that if I had a baby then my last wish would be a very different one. But that's not something I like to talk about. I'll tell you what I did come to talk about. You see, I have been thinking that we should get rid of Mr. Big. That's right, don't look so shocked until you hear me out. It would be just like in that movie that came out a year or two ago, only I do not want to get into a lesbian entanglement with you. I mean, no offense or anything, it's just not my cup of tea. Actually I would like some of whatever you're drinking. Diet Coke is fine. Don't slip me a Mickey, okay? A joke, honey. That's a joke. I'm full of them. Probably every joke you've heard over the past eight years has been right from my mouth. Mr. Big has no sense of rhythm or timing — in *anything*, you know?

Truth is you look a far sight better than how he painted you, and you look a damn lot better than that photo of you all in that church family book. I mean it made me sick to see Mr. Big Ass sitting there grinning like he was the best husband in the world when of course I knew the truth. Honey, there are facts and then there are facts, and the fact is that he is a loser with a capital *L*.

Arsenic is big where I'm from. I guess anywhere you've got a lot of pests there's a need for poison, and then maybe your perception of what constitutes a pest grows and changes over the years. There was a woman from a couple of towns over who went on a tear and fed arsenic to practically everybody she knew. If she had had herself a religious mission like Bo and Peep or Do and Mi, whatever those fools were called who tried to hitch a ride on the comet by committing suicide in new Nikes, or like that Waco Freak, or, you know, that Jim guy with the Kool-Aid down in Guyana, she'd have gotten a lot of coverage – *People* magazine, *Prime Time*, you name it. When they finally wised up to her, she had enough ant killer stashed in her pantry to wipe out this whole county. It's big in this state. Cyanide, too, might be good because you've got that whiff of almond you might could hide in some baked goods. But I don't know how to get that.

I know what you're thinking, sister. I've been there. You see, your husband has been faithful to me for eight long years, and why he up and pulled this stunt I don't know. Middle-age crazy, I suspect. Maybe he wanted somebody younger and shapelier. Maybe he wanted somebody a little more hot to trot like my oldest friend — practically a relative — who sleeps with anybody who can fog a mirror, and her own little lambs fast asleep in the very next room.

If I had had my own little lamb, my life would have been very different. And I was going to tell you about the real me, so I'll just begin before I go back to my plan. You keep thinking about it while I do my autobiography for you. You see, I think that my first knowledge that I would live the life I do is when I was in the eighth grade and my foot jumped right into a size nine shoe. Now I'm looking over and I see that you are about a seven and a half, which is a very safe place for a foot to be these days. That's a safe size. But I hit nine so fast and all of the women in my family said, "Where did she get that foot?" My brother called me Big Foot. My great-aunt said, "Oh my God in heaven, what if she grows into those?" This from a woman who was so wide, her butt took up a whole shopping aisle at the CVS. I mean, it isn't exactly like I came from aristocracy but they thought so, or at least they thought that a slim little petite foot meant that somebody way, way back stepped off the boat in some size fours.

I maxed out at a size ten when I was a senior in high school. There they are, full-grown pups, and honey, there isn't a single shoe on the market that I don't order and wear. Sometimes I have to order a ten and a half (I firmly believe that this is the result of the Asian influence in this country). I finally got to an age where I could look out at the world and say, "Fine — I am of good solid peasant stock; I am earth woman, working the fields, turning the soil." I can dig with my hands, and I can dig with my feet. My folks aren't sitting out on the veranda as much as they'd like to be. They are picking cotton and tobacco leaves, and when they get their tired hot bodies back to the shanties at the edge of the field, then here comes The Mister from the Big House. I know that might sound stupid to you, but the size of my feet made me both tough and subservient. I thought long ago that it could all turn around with me meeting the right person at the right time, but that has yet to happen.

You know when I first met Mr. Big, though, I thought it might be happening. Part of the reason I liked him so much that first time is because he talked a lot about you and your son, and he really did seem to care. I even asked him the first

time we met in a more personal way, you know, didn't it bother him that he was cheating on you. He said at the time that it was okay because you were cheating on him; I let it be an excuse because he did look pretty cute back then, but I think I knew that you weren't really having an affair. I mean, you had a one-year-old. Now, I've never had a one-year-old but I sure do read enough, and know enough folks who do, that I know the odds of you having time to run around were out of the question. You were probably lucky to get a shower, am I right?

He showed me a picture of your son the first night I ever met him — a cute little thing, plump and grinning — but after we started sleeping together he never showed me any more pictures of your boy. Or you for that matter, other than Mr. Big's Holier Than Thou Church Photo. I should have known to leave him alone right then. I should have said Kiss Off and disappeared. And I'm still not entirely sure why I stayed, except that I was very lonely and I knew that he was safe.

I'm still lonely. I know you might think I'm putting too much stock on the size of my feet, but in my mind it is a physical symbol of my difference in my family. They are all over there in the nice warm room lit by firelight, and I'm way off yonder by the barbed-wire fence with snow on my boots while I shiver and peep in. I've always felt that way, and therefore, I'm comfortable with it. I used to get hopeful every now and then, but I got over it.

And this woman! She is much younger than you are, honey. And she has got boobs such that you could place a cafeteria tray there (man-made, I'm sure). Short skirts. Over the knee boots, I mean, really. Everybody says I have awful taste in clothes, and I do much better than she does. I mean to tell you Mr. Big has hit bottom. Here he had us, two perfectly good-hearted, good-looking women, and he falls for that? If I were you, I might even take precautions against disease. She might be packaged to look clean, but that is one sordid thing. Check her out some time. I have her working schedule at Blockbuster's, and I know her address and phone number. As a matter of fact I've already started in harrassing her for you. Don't thank me. I'm doing it for me, too.

So, I say we bump him off. Real easy. Slip him the poison. Start in small doses and then up it and up it until he's so sick with what seems to be the flu or some awful stomach problem and then we either choke or smother him, say he did it while trying to be a pig and eat while you weren't around. If you carry it through, you know, fall completely apart — grieve, rage, mention that hussy whore girlfriend down at Blockbuster, don't tamper with the will (a document that does not make a single mention of me!), then they'll believe you, especially when you say that you feel you've got to get that man in the ground as quickly as possible.

Done. Then you just go on about your business and I go on about mine and they might put Miss Blockbuster in the slammer. Truth is that I don't have much business and never have.

I almost had a baby one time. The daddy was nowhere to be found. Get up and shake the sheets, and he'd blown clean out the window and down the road, never to be heard from again. Well, here came a baby. Everybody kept telling me to get rid of it, but when have I ever done what anybody said to me? Never. So I plodded along, planning. I had lots and lots of plans. But it was a bad joke — a fake baby. No breath, no heartbeat. I looked at it and realized that was my life. No breath, no heartbeat. No life for me. I'm a slave girl — a servant. I'm one rung lower than a dog.

Mr. Big is too low to be called a dog; that would be an insult to canines everywhere. He didn't call you back that time. He was never there for me, not that I ever expected it; but what if just once he had been? What if just once somebody had taken better care of me, taken me to a real doctor, gotten some help. And Mr. Big knows that you've been feeling down lately, but does Mr. Big care? No. I say we kill him.

Oh, but I see doubt in your eyes. I see love, and for that I sure am sorry for you. You better lose that light, honey.

Bring him down. Think of Delilah. Cut off his strength and watch him go blind and pull a building down on himself. Sap him while you can.

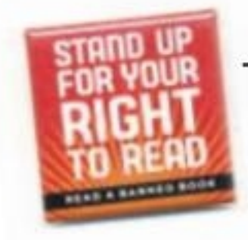
Oh, my, stop crying. Lord. I didn't come over here for this. You are not the woman I thought you were from that photo in the church book. You looked to me in that picture like a women who could enlist in a complicated plot, but you are a bundle of jumpy weepy nerves. I know that we'd no sooner put Mr. Big down under, but what you'd be confessing and giving out my name. You are a tattletale. You were probably one in school and you're still one. I still call and hang up on the tattletale from my school, that's how much I hate a tattletale.

Oh, yeah, I can see it all, now. You're sitting there thinking about how you could nail *me*. The wife would get it easy. A woman under stress conned by the mistress. You're crazy if you think I'd fall for that one. I may not have any children to worry over, but I have pride. I have dignity. I have the child I almost had and lots of times that keeps me in line. I imagine where he'd be right now, twelve years old — my son waiting for me to get home so he can complain about what I don't have in the refrigerator. I tell people, maybe men I might've just met, "Oh no, I don't stay out late. My son will be waiting for me." Don' think I don't know what it feels like. I was pregnant. I had mood swings. I studied all those wonderful little pictures of the fishy-looking baby growing legs like a tadpole — moving from water to land, just that easily.

But you have everything for real. You have Mr. Big legally.

You are hopeless woman. I'm the one that ought to be crying! Snap to. Listen to some good advice, because in a minute I'll be out of here. You tell him that you know all about that little bitch he's been seeing (she works at Blockbuster Video and wears way too much eye make-up). Tell him he better shape his butt up or you are out of here, sister. Make him sweat. I mean I don't want a thing to do with him, you know? So use me. Call me by name. Tell him I'll come to your divorce hearing and help you clean up. Get him back if you want him, and make him behave. But don't let him off easy. Pitch a blue blazing fit. Scream, curse, throw things. Let him have it, honey. Your husband is cheating on us. Let him have it. And when all is said and done, please just forget that I was ever here; that I ever walked the earth. After all, I'm Big Foot. Who knows if I even exist.

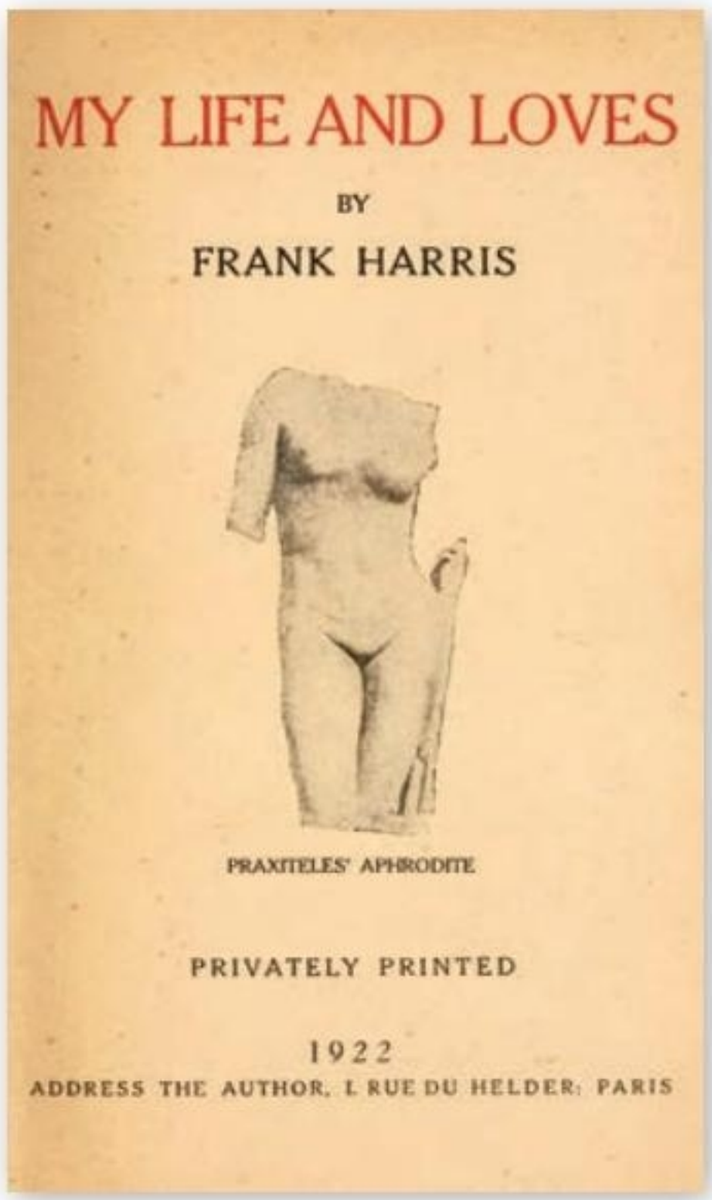
Jill McCorkle is a daughter of Lumberton (NC) and an award-winning author of ten novels and books of short stories. Five of her books have been named Notable Books by the New York Times *and four of her short stores appeared in the* Best American Short Stories *series. Like Lee Smith, her fellow Good Ol' Girl, Jill is a resident of Hillsborough and a North Carolina treasure.*



So Bad It's Good

Famous banned book covers artfully reimagined

Featuring Charlotte Oden, Debi Hammack, Mark Weber and Harry Taylor



The first summer I went away to Boy Scout camp at age 11, I took an internationally banned book along for casual reading.

Of course, at the time, I didn't know it was a famously banned book. It was simply a thick paperback volume from my dad's overstuffed bookshelf that featured a classical drawing of a nude Aphrodite on its cover. The author had a cool handlebar mustache. I thought it might be about an Englishman's adventures in the Near East and remember a blurb on the cover that said something to the effect: "The Book that Shocked an Entire Continent." The title was *My Life and Loves,* by Frank Harris.

In fact, the author was a controversial Irishman and author, newspaper editor, short story writer and social gadfly who railed against censorship and puritanism in all forms. His lurid and engaging 600-page memoir — which was banned in Britain and America for 40 years and first published privately in Paris — related colorful tales about his close friendships with leading politicians and celebrities of the Victorian Age. But it also brought down the ire of the U.S. Postal Service and British and American censors for its explicit depictions of the author's sexual exploits with willing Victorian Age debutantes.

The book, I learned many years later, tainted the otherwise estimable career of Harris, who authored well-respected biographies of Shakespeare, Goethe and his close friend Oscar Wilde, among others. He was also pals with the likes of George Bernard Shaw and Winston Churchill.

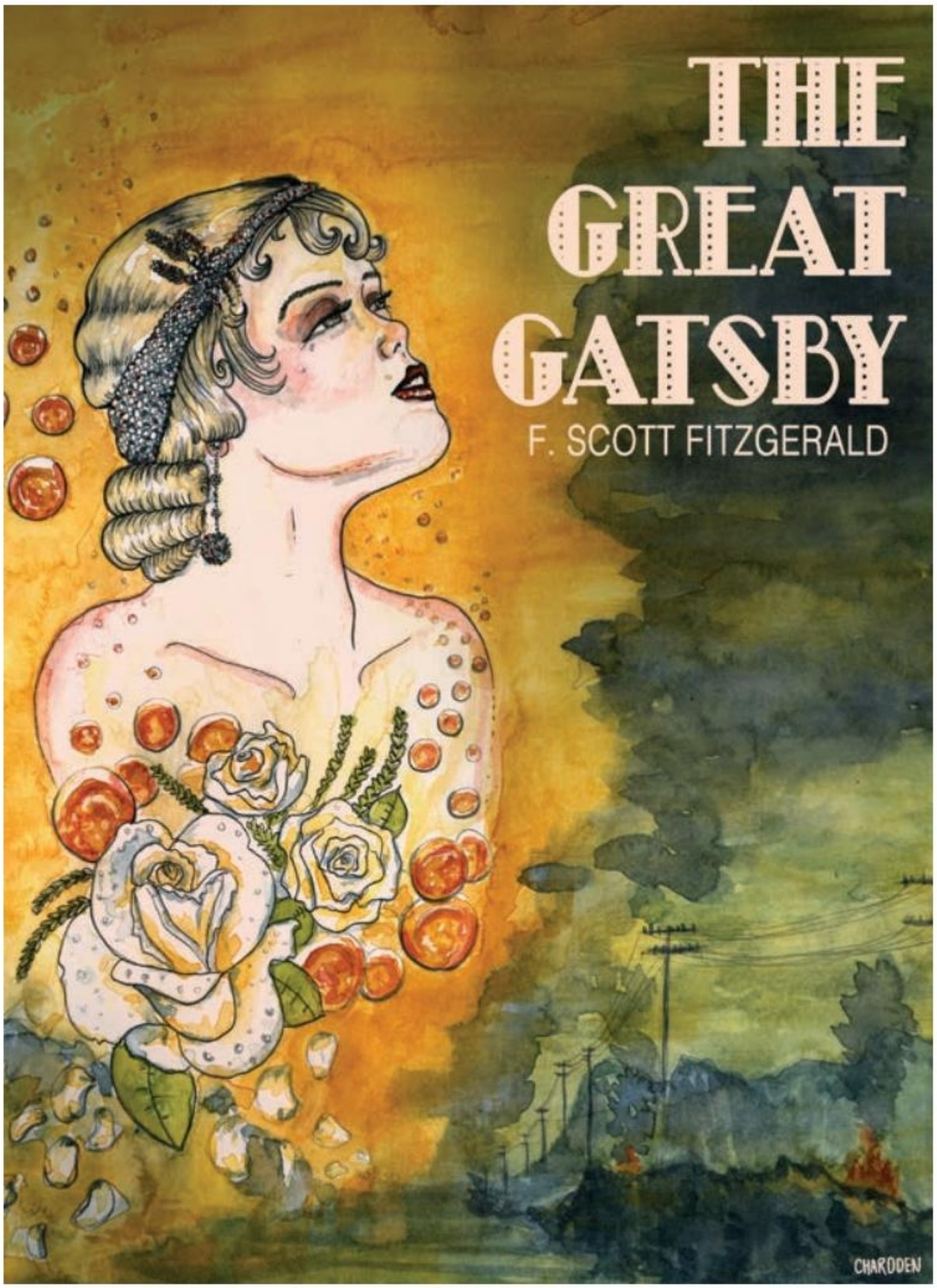
Needless to say, *My Life and Loves* was potential dynamite in the hands of an 11-year-old Tenderfoot Scout and would surely have gotten me sent packing before the Friday Mile Swim had anyone known the revealing subject matter contained therein. I remember telling friends it was just a boring book about Greek and Roman mythology.

Today *My Life and Loves* is considered a classic of eroticism and historical reporting. I still own a copy.

In this spirit, just for fun — being August and our annual Reading Issue — we invited several talented artists and photographers from our three sister magazines to imagine updated covers for famous banned books of their choosing.

As they lavishly prove, even if you can't judge a book by its cover, you can sure have fun illustrating something that was once considered so bad for you — it's good.

— *Jim Dodson*



Watercolor, ink pen and graphite

THE GREAT GATSBY

by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Year published: 1925

Year banned: 1987

Challenged by Baptist College in Charleston, SC for "language and sexual reference in the book."

Considered by many to be the 20th century's great American novel.

CHARLOTTE ODEN is an illustrator and designer living in Wilmington. A graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design, her inspiration comes from a strong interest in vintage fashion, film, antiques, and old photographs. She has a number of commercial projects around town: You can see her work at the 24 South Coffee House and Bombers Beverage Company, and she recently completed a large chalk mural for the downtown restaurant Dram & Morsel. See more of her work at charoden.com

Johnny Got His Gun

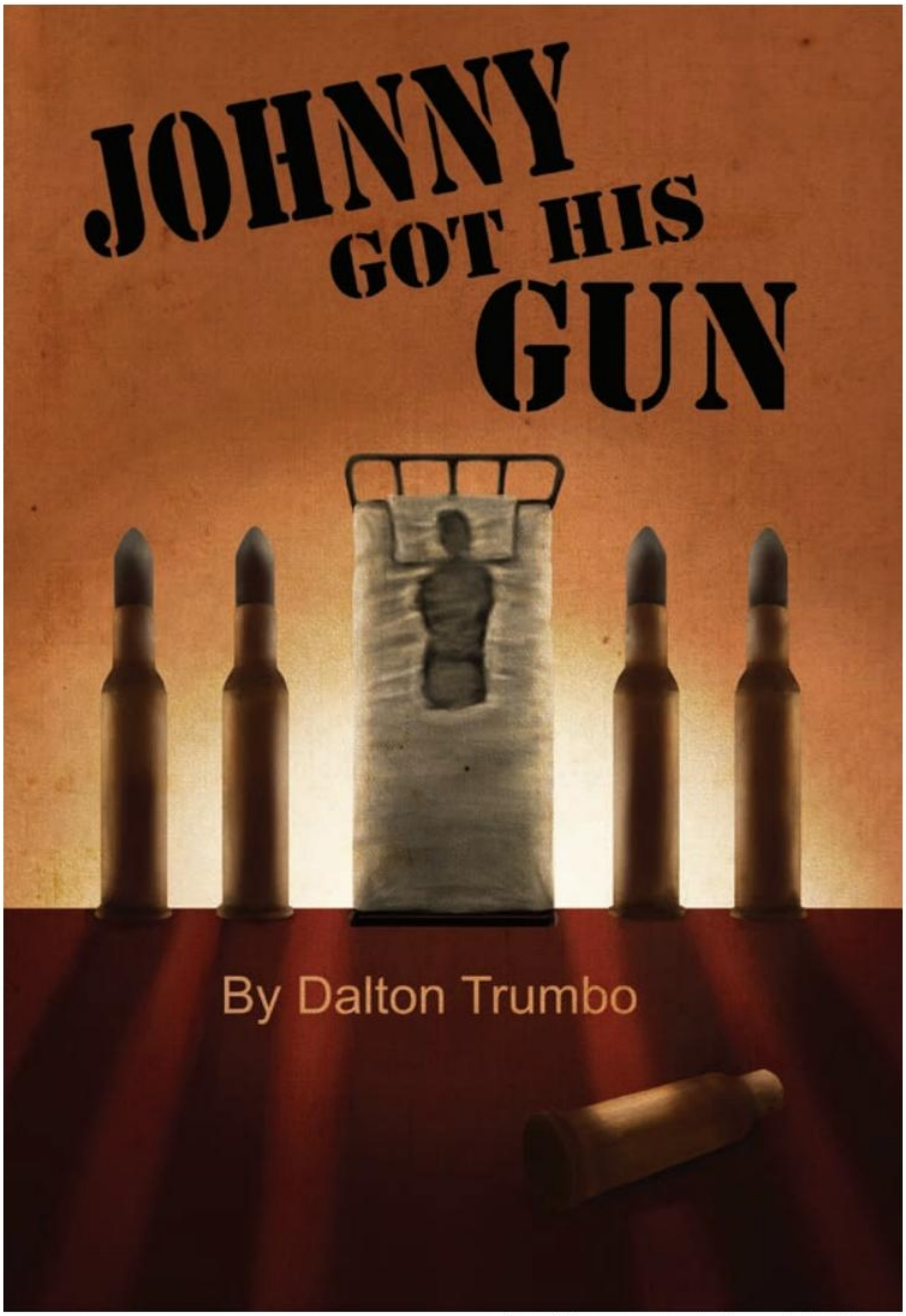
Dalton Trumbo

Year published: 1938

Year banned: Suspended publication during World War II

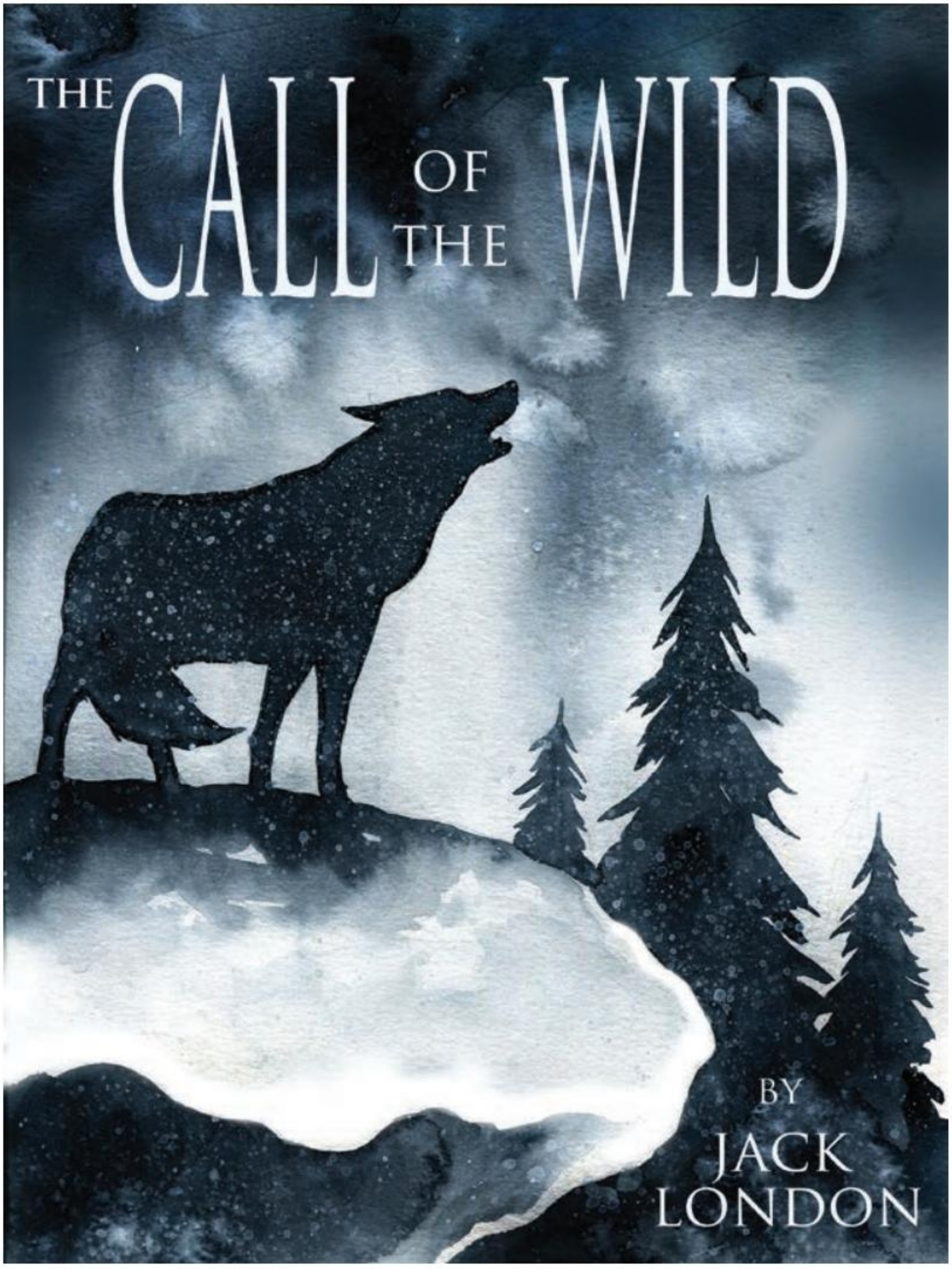
Book was considered anti-American and inspired leftist rallies. Trumbo was blacklisted in the 1950s.

Winner of National Book Award, 1939



Digital illustration using ArtRage and Corel Painter

Debi Hammack came to illustration via a circuitous route. After earning a degree in marine biology from UNCW, she returned to her native Maryland and became a self-taught illustrator, film, and comic-book artist. She soon gravitated back to the North Carolina film industry, where she created storyboards for *Sleepy Hollow* and the upcoming show *Mr. Mercedes* as well as for smaller indie films and commercials. And her marine biology training has come in handy: "I can still draw a darn good fish!" See more of her work at www.debihammack.com.



Watercolor

The Call of the Wild

by Jack London

Year published: 1903

Year banned: 1929

Banned in Yugoslavia and Italy due to the author's Socialist views. Burned by the Nazis in 1933.

Now published in more than 47 countries. Has been in print since publication.

Mark Weber has been an artist and illustrator for more than 30 years. His work has appeared in many publications, including *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *International Herald Tribune*. He has also illustrated many books for children. He is a board member of No Boundaries, an international arts colony that takes place annually on Bald Head Island. He lives in Wilmington. See more of his work at at weberillustration.com.

Slaughterhouse Five

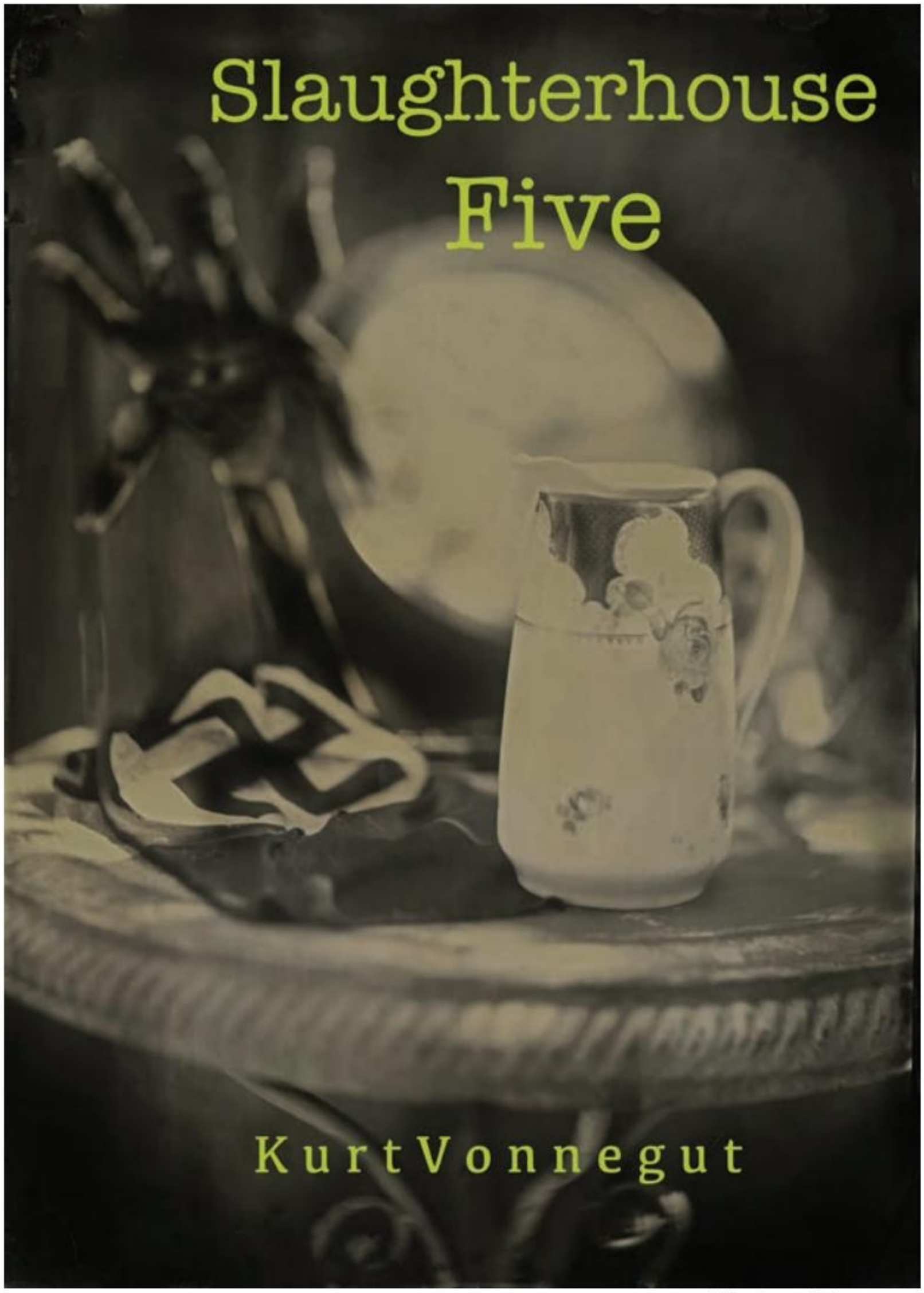
by Kurt Vonnegut

Year published: 1969

Year banned: 1972

Why banned: "Depraved, immoral, psychotic, vulgar, and anti-Christian." Michigan judge

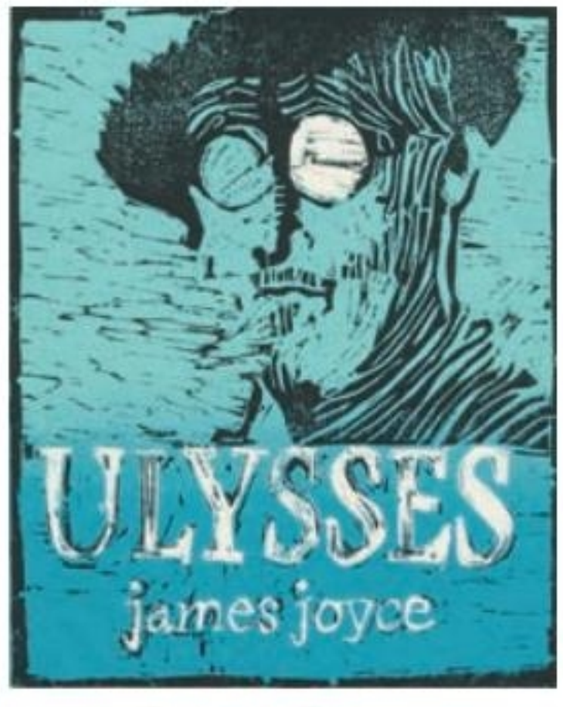
There have been more than 18 attempts to ban the book since 1972.



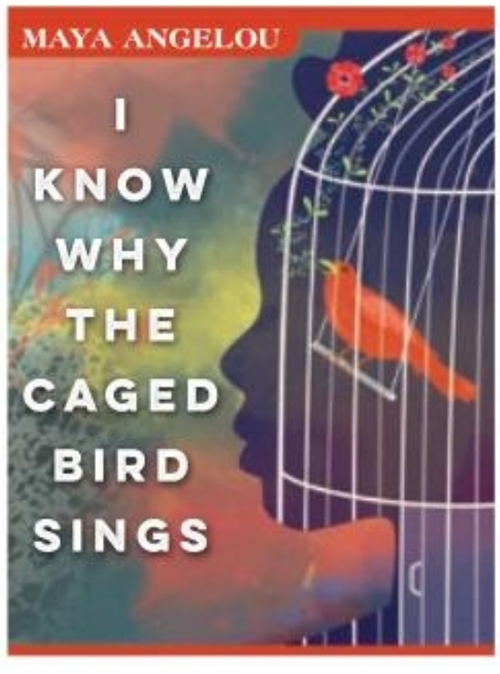
Wet plate collodion, tintype

PHOTOGRAPH OF HARRY TAYLOR BY DAVID SOUTHERLAND

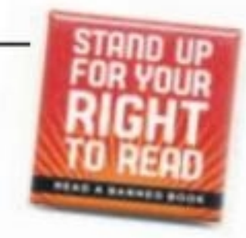
HARRY TAYLOR is a photographer with an interest in the history of the American South. Using the 19th-century wet plate collodion process, he incorporates large-format cameras to create lush images that are redolent of the past. His editorial work has been featured in many magazines, including *The Paris Review, Garden & Gun, The Oxford American,* and *The Atlantic.* In 2018 his work will be featured in a solo exhibition at Louisburg College in Louisburg, North Carolina. See more of his work at www.harrytaylorphoto.com



DENISE BAKER
Whispering Pines, NC



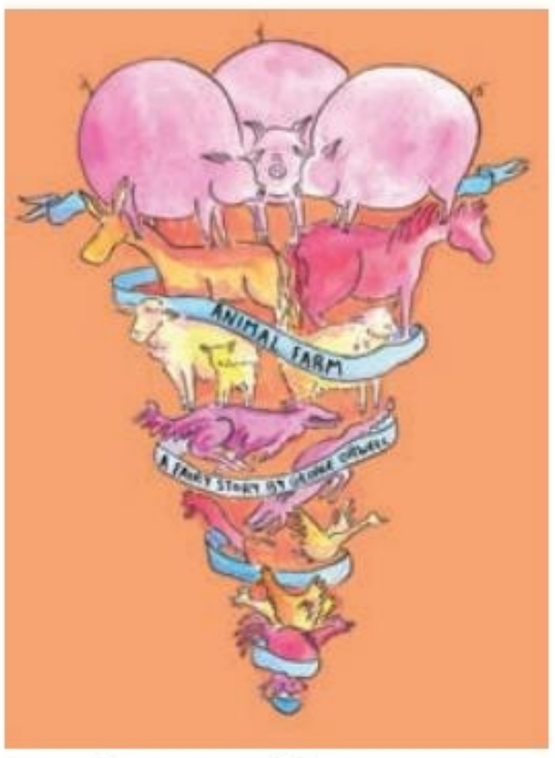
MARGARET BAXTER
Greensboro, NC



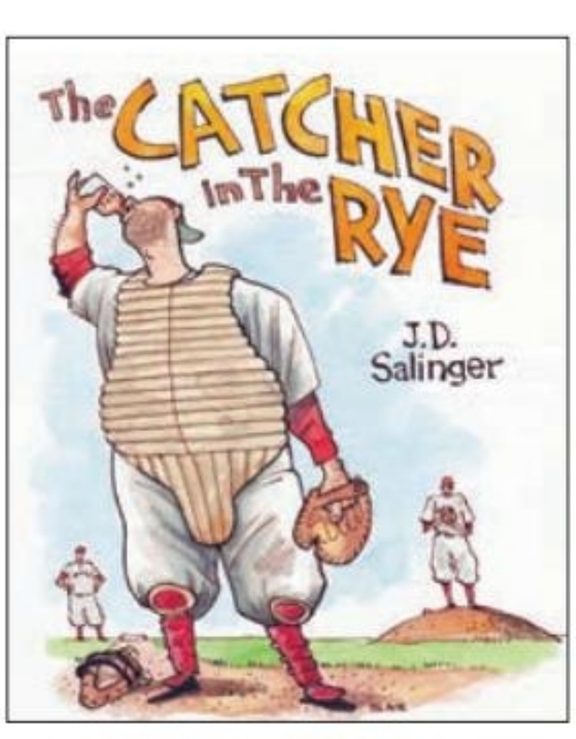
AND FROM THE FERTILE IMAGINATIONS OF OUR CLEVER BOOK COVER ARTISTS AT SISTER PUBLICATIONS *PINESTRAW* & *O.HENRY* . . .

THOMAS BOATWRIGHT
Greensboro, NC

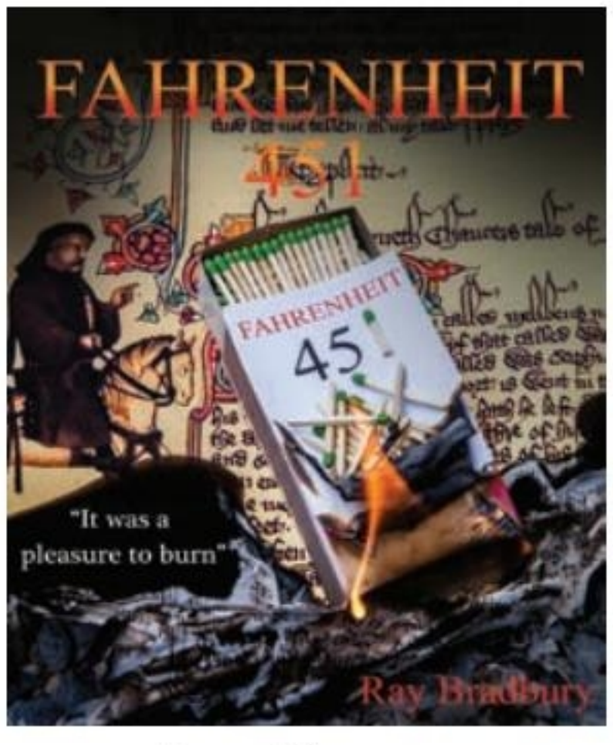
ROMEY PETITE
Southern Pines, NC



LAUREL HOLDEN
Southern Pines, NC



HARRY BLAIR
Greensboro, NC



JOHN GESSNER
Aberdeen, NC

RAY MARTIN
Greensboro, NC

STORY OF A HOUSE

Of Time and the River

A tiny retreat on the Cape Fear is the perfect place to recharge

By John Wolfe • Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

RIVER
GUEST

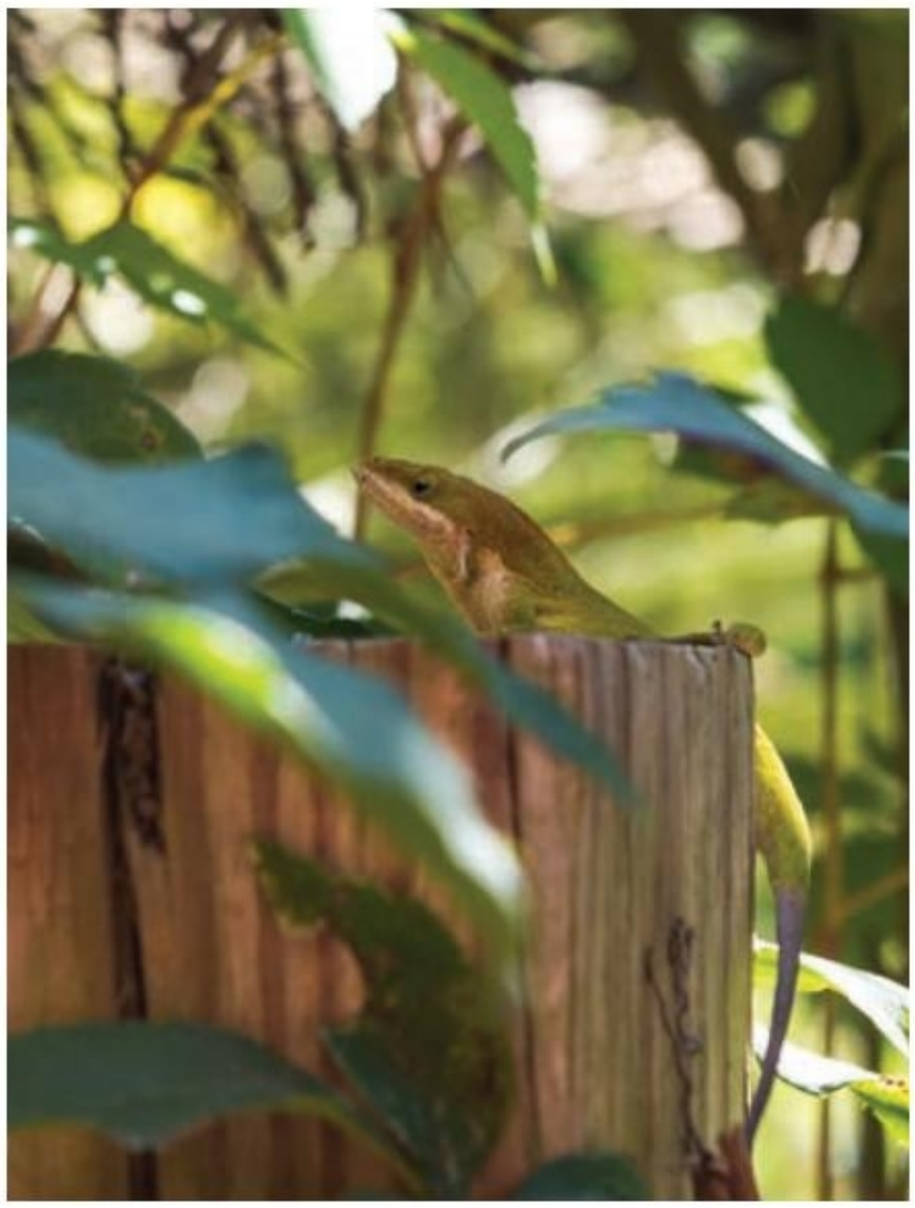
There are certain places on this planet, made distinctive by their rarity, where the passage of time moves slowly enough to be fully appreciated and enjoyed. Often in these places, a branch of the natural world resides near enough to usurp man-made timekeeping devices, returning the place to a tempo of unhurried, wild immediacy. At the Bridge Tender's River Lodge in Castle Hayne, a guest retreat cabin built and decorated by Doug Springer and Diane Upton, it is the Northeast Cape Fear River that sets the pace as it flows by the front door, on its steady journey back to the Atlantic.

Doug and Diane are as tied to this river as any couple can claim to be. Together with four other partners, they own and operate Wilmington Water Tours, a river cruise company that reveals, to all who wish to know, the ecological and historical secrets of the river coursing past the streets of the Port City. Doug also served as the Cape Fear riverkeeper from 2007 until 2010, when he passed the mantle to current riverkeeper Kemp Burdette. Doug and Diane love the river not just for its natural beauty — "You should see it in October," Diane tells me — but for its historical and sociological importance as well. Just upriver from the lodge, Doug says, was what is believed to be the first drawbridge in North America, the site of an 8,000-man prisoner exchange during the Civil War, and a strategically important spot the patriots occupied during the American Revolution. Of the thousands of lead bullets found on the river's bottom from those time periods, most had a single hole drilled through them, meaning they were not fired in anger, but rather used as sinkers in the makeshift fishing rigs of bored soldiers. Doug also mentions an English pipe found nearby that dates back to 1570, a date which

makes me look at the river a little differently. What other ancient secrets do these whispering waters hold?

The lodge is the perfect place to wonder such thoughts, for it is a dwelling built to point in one direction — toward the river. Every seat in the lodge offers river views, thanks to wide front windows and a strategically placed mirror on the back wall, but the best seats by far are out on the wide, amber-stained front porch. A ponderer has their pick between rocking chairs, or a well-loved cotton hammock. The view of the river (which is never the same twice) is framed on one side by a cypress tree which Doug and Diane found as a seedling on one of their excursions upriver; now relocated and grown, it reaches skyward and offers the blue-green dragonflies a branch on which to light. An often-visited bird feeder hangs from another branch, beneath silver cascades of Spanish moss. At the left-hand edge of the framed river, we are given a manmade object to ruminate on, one which, by its presence, creates a delightful contrast with the larger natural world surrounding it: the old railroad bridge, from which the lodge draws its name. Once part of the Wilmington-Weldon Railroad (the longest railroad in the world for a brief yet exciting moment in 1840), the bridge has slowly assimilated with the river it spans. Red rust bleeds through its silver paint. Green plants shoot up through its abandoned tracks. It is a fitting piece to ponder in a place where the sounds of the distant highway are drowned out by the droning thrum of cicadas.

The cozy interior of the lodge offers everything a person could need, with nothing extraneous to distract from the flowing waters and wildflowers just beyond the threshold. The main room is open and airy, separated from the well-appointed Lilliputian kitchen by a black marble bar, which doubles as the kitchen table. The kitchen counter (and the bathroom's, as well) is one solid slab of varnished pine, lending a rustic log-cabin feel that nicely balances out the modern appliances. The windows are high on the walls, offering privacy while allowing in an abundance of natural light, and are framed with blond unfinished



wood. Diane has curated the space with a homey, lived-in feeling; this comes from the liberal use of local artifacts like brown growler bottles from Waterline Brewery, an assortment of CDs from local musicians in a basket atop the stereo, a longleaf pine cone perched on a windowsill ("Here's to the land of the longleaf pine," as the Old North State's celebrated toast begins), and a hat hook by the door made from a railroad spike pulled from the adjacent tracks. Leaning against the stereo is a 3/4-scale Taylor acoustic guitar (which, I am happy to report, does a marvelous job of serenading the river from the porch on warm summer nights).

The lodge was designed by Ron Wilson, who has won awards for green building while teaching architecture at Cape Fear Community College. The unique two-gabled roof design transforms the 20-by-20-foot structure from a box into a home. The building was brought from the page into reality by local builder and waterman Charles Robbins, a longtime friend of the couple's. "He built it like it was his own house," said Doug. "It's well insulated, and very energy efficient." The construction took only six months, thanks to Robbins's 40 years of building experience.

Anybody who wishes to build his or her own river lodge need only contact Doug: He has offered to give the plans away, free of charge, to anyone who would like to build a river lodge (or a creek lodge, for that matter). Presumably this stems from his environmentalist background; if you live by the water, you start forming a personal connection, and realize not just your own relationship to our planet but your responsibility to it, as well. Becoming an environmentalist is easy, as David Gessner has written; just fall in love with a place and then fight for it. Caring for the planet often begins in one backyard, or on one body of water. Each place is connected to everywhere else.

Here at the lodge, one feels that connection strongly. This cozy cabin on the banks of the mighty Cape Fear is a place to recharge one's batteries, a breath of stillness and peace amid life's commotion and chaos.

John Wolfe studied creative nonfiction at UNCW. When he's not in the water, he wishes he were.

ALMANAC

August

By Ash Alder

Heat, ma'am! It was so dreadful here, that I found there was nothing left for it but to take off my flesh and sit in my bones.

— Sydney Smith, *Lady Holland's Memoir*

Berry Good

If ever you've stumbled upon a tangle of wild blackberries, perhaps you have felt the sweet stings of freedom that poet Mary Oliver describes in her poem named for this sultry month. You have tasted the "black honey of summer" and have the scratches on your legs and arms to prove it.

August conjures the soft thuds of the earliest apples; gifts us with eggplant and sweet corn and towering sunflowers; plucks the season's first ripe figs or else leaves them for the birds.

The air feels like a wet cloth over our mouths and skin. We move in slow motion. We move to the shade. We move indoors, where the fan dances in lazy circles.

Heirloom tomatoes are peeled, seeded and chopped for gazpacho. Watermelon is sliced into tidy triangles. The ants that march along the juicy rinds remind us there is work to do:

Can or freeze the excess harvest.

Stake the vines and prune the shrubs.

Prepare the soil for autumn plantings — beets, carrots, peas and greens.

But don't forget to play. When you stumble upon a patch of swollen berries "in the brambles nobody owns," do as Oliver illustrates. Allow yourself to get lost in the delicious moment. Savor the sweetness of this harvest month.

Summer set lip to earth's bosom bare, And left the flushed print in a poppy there.

— Francis Thompson, 1859–1907

Ethereal Wonders

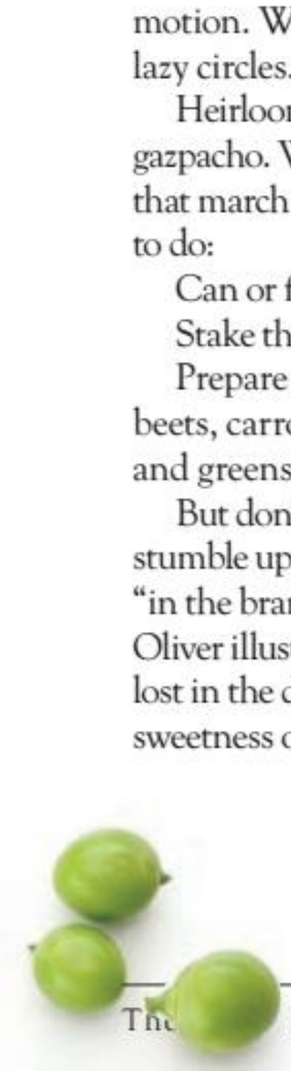
The August sky reveals to us countless wonders. Following the full Green Corn Moon on Monday, Aug. 7, the annual Perseid meteor shower will peak on the night of Saturday, Aug. 12, until the wee hours of Sunday, Aug. 13. Although a waning gibbous moon may compromise the view, it's possible to see 60 to 100 meteors per hour. Cozy up with the crickets and test your luck.

Something you can't blink and miss: A total eclipse of the sun occurs this year on Monday, Aug. 21. Visible for up to two minutes and 40 seconds along a narrow arc that starts in Oregon and slices across the states to South Carolina, the Great American Total Solar Eclipse will cause eerie bands of light to shimmer across the darkening sky as the sun slips behind the hungry moon. Do wear eye protection for this so-called celestial coincidence, and find maps of the path and more information at www.eclipse2017.org. Prepare to be truly dazzled. North America won't see anything like it until April 8, 2024.

The Sacred Hazel

According to Celtic tree astrology, those born from Aug. 5 to Sept. 1 draw wisdom from the sacred hazel, a tree whose forked branches have long been used as divining rods, and whose medicinal leaves and bark create a potent astringent. If you've any doubt that this tree possesses magical properties, consider that it produces the star ingredient of Nutella (and that said ingredient, the hazelnut, is believed to invoke prophetic visions). But back to humans: Analytical and organized, hazel archetypes are often considered the "know-it-alls" of the zodiac. Although they tend to hum with nervous energy, they seem to get along swimmingly with rowans (Jan. 22 to Feb. 18) and hawthorns (May 13 to June 9).

The gladiolus may be the bright and showy birth flower of August, but what says summer like the sunflower? As they follow the sun across the sky, these cheerful giants remind us that we become that which we give our focus. What will you attract this month?



Arts Calendar

South Pacific

8/2-20

Life Rolls On Surf Competition

8/5

Jazz at the Mansion

8/10

8/1 Tech at the Beach

3 p.m. Workshop presented by AARP Coastal Volunteers designed to sharpen your technology skills so can stay connected with friends and family on social networks. RSVP no later than Friday, July 28. Admission: Free. Brightmore Independent Living, 2324 S. 41st St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-1980 or www.brightmoreofwilmington.com.

8/2 10th Annual Breakfast at the Kids' Table

7:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. A breakfast fundraiser for the Brigade Boys & Girls Club, presented by Live Oak Bank. Admission: Free. Port City Community Church, 250 Vision Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 392-0747 or www.brigadebgc.org.

8/2-8/20 South Pacific/Opera House Theatre

Schedule available online. Local theatre performance of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific* presented by Opera House Theatre Company. Admission: $27–32. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

8/3 Tzofim Friendship Caravan

7:30 p.m. An interactive Israeli culture show that is fun and engaging for people of all ages and backgrounds, presented by The Tzofim (Israel Scouts) Friendship Caravan, a group of Israeli teens. Admission: Free. Hannah Block Community Arts Center, 120 S. Second St., Wilmington. Info: www.israelscouts.org/friendship-caravan.

8/5 Life Rolls On Surf Competition

6 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Local surf competition in Carolina Beach for people with disabilities. Breakfast, lunch and adaptable equipment are provided. Admission: Free. Beach access, 2 N. Carolina Beach Ave., Carolina Beach. Info: www.liferollson.org/northcarolina/.

8/6 Beaches: Views from the Cape Fear Museum's Collection

2 p.m. – 3 p.m. A fun look at New Hanover County's historic beach communities led by historian Jan Davidson, featuring vintage postcards and photos. Admission: Free. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market St.. Info: (910) 798-4350 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

8/8 "An Exploration of Dance Series" Session Three: Dance and Emotion

2 p.m. The third and final part of a three-part series presented by a Hoggard High School student showcasing how society has evolved to produce the modern style of dance. RSVP no later than Monday, Aug. 7. Admission: Free. Brightmore Independent Living, 2298 S. 41st St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-1980 or www.brightmoreofwilmington.com.

8/10 Jazz at the Mansion

6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. An evening at Bellamy Mansion featuring a live performance by Candida Rose and Mangroove. Admission: $10–18. The Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

8/10–13 Yoga Teacher Training

9 a.m. – 6 p.m. 5Elements Flow and Ayurveda yoga teacher training with Noelle Whittington. Admission: $500–$550. Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive, Suite 200, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-0234 or wilmingtonyogacenter.com.

8/12 Battleship 101

9 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. & 12–2 p.m. Volunteers engage visitors in the subjects of gunnery, radar, sickbay, gallery, engineering and daily shipboard life. Admission: $6–14. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

Total Eclipse of the Art

8/21

Tantra Basics

8/25-27

Lumina Daze

8/27

8/12-13 Sneads Ferry Shrimp Festival
9:30 a.m. – 10:30 p.m. (Saturday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Annual shrimp festival featuring a parade, live music, cornhole tournament, seafood and whole hog cook-off, carnival rides, fireworks, and more. Admission: $6. Sneads Ferry Community Center, 126 Park Lane, Sneads Ferry. Info: (910) 467-6530 or www.sneadsferryshrimpfestival.org.

8/12-13 Wrightsville Beach Wahine Classic
8 a.m. A female surfing competition for surfers of all experience levels at the south end of Wrightsville Beach. Admission: Free (spectators); Registration prices available on website. Beach access at Oceanic Restaurant, 703 S. Lumina Ave., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 465-9638 or www.wahineclassic.com.

8/15 Senior Beach Day
9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Beach day at Carolina Beach for seniors including various beach games and activities, food, and adaptable ocean gear provided by Ocean Cure. RSVP no later than Friday, Aug. 11. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach Boardwalk, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 350-1980 or www.brightmoreofwilmington.com.

8/16 Youth Program
10:30 a.m. Hurricanes: Extreme Weather. A local weatherman will come to talk about what a hurricane is and what happens when we get a hurricane warning or watch. Weather related activities and light refreshments included. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach, 303 W. Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2569 or wbmuseumofhistory.com.

8/18 & 19 Seaglass Salvage Market
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday). Once a month indoor/outdoor market filled with up cycled, recycled and repurposed furniture and home décor items, salvage pieces perfect for DIY projects, yard and garden décor, jewelry and local honey. Admission: Free. 1987 Andrew Jackson Highway (Hwy 74/76), Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

8/18-19 Sneads Ferry King Mackerel Tournament
2 p.m. – 8 p.m. (Friday); 7 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. (Sunday). 26th annual king mackerel tournament presented by The Rotary Club of Sneads Ferry and Power Marine Outfitters. Admission: Registration prices available online. New River Marina, 104 James St., Sneads Ferry. Info: (910) 938-0930 or www.sfkmt.com.

8/18-20 O'Neill/Sweetwater Pro-Am Surf Festival
8 a.m. One of the largest surfing contests on the East Coast featuring dozens of local surfers and nearly 100 professional surfers from around the world. Admission: $15–150. Birmingham St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-3821 or www.sweetwatersurfshop.com.

8/20 Boogie in the Park Concert Series
5 p.m. – 7 p.m. Free summer concert series in Kure Beach featuring a live musical performance by The Midatlantic. Bring your own chair or blanket. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Ave., Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

8/21 Total Eclipse of the Art
1 p.m. – 6 p.m. A meet-and-greet celebration of local and regional artists and artisans who make our "Eclipse" happen everyday. Light refreshments available. Admission: Free. Eclipse Artisan Boutique, 203 Racine Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 799-9883 or www.eclipseartisanboutique.com.

8/25 Fourth Friday
6 – 9 p.m. Downtown galleries, studios and art spaces open their doors to the public in an after-

hours celebration of art and culture. Admission: Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

8/25–27 Tantra Basics

6 – 8 p.m. (Friday); 11:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (Saturday and Sunday). Ayurveda and Tantra basics with Katie Silcox focusing on the three vital forces. Admission: $260–285. Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive, Suite 200, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-0234 or wilmingtonyogacenter.com.

8/26 Last Chance for White Pants Gala

7 p.m. – 12 a.m. (8/27). End-of-summer gala supporting Lower Cape Fear Hospice's services and programs. Admission: $150. Audi Cape Fear, 255 Old Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 796-8099 or www.lcfhfoundation.org.

8/26 International Street Food Challenge and Benefit

9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. A street food festival featuring several local chefs preparing various street foods from around the world. Admission: Free (entry) – $15 (competition). USS North Carolina Battleship, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 338-9454.

8/27 Lumina Daze

5 p.m. – 9 p.m. Annual oceanside event featuring a silent auction of artwork from local artists, live music, dancing, food and beverages, and showings of short films. Admission: $20. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Blvd., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2569 or www.wbmuseumofhistory.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday Wrightsville Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and crafts. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Monday – Wednesday Cinematique Films

7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday Wine Tasting

6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 S. Front St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 S. Fifth Ave.. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday Ogden Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Wednesday Poplar Grove Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Wednesday); 3–7 p.m. (Thursday). Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic

SALT SERVICES

Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 Us Highway 17 N., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Wednesday — T'ai Chi at CAM

12:30–1:30 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday — Wednesday Echo

7:30–11:30 p.m. Weekly singer/songwriter open mic night that welcomes all genres of music. Each person will have 3–6 songs. Palm Room, 11 E. Salisbury St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-3040.

Wednesday – Sunday — Tours at Southern Living Idea House

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Wednesday – Saturday); 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Sunday). Self-guided tours of the 2017 *Southern Living* Idea House. A portion of ticket sales will go to help the nonprofit Old Baldy Foundation. 204 Whale Head Way, Bald Head Island. Info: www.southerliving.com/ideahouse.

Thursday — Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday — Dinner Theatre

7 p.m. TheatreNOW presents Robert Aguirre-Sacasa's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* based on the novel by Oscar Wilde. Runs through 8/26. TheatreNOW, 19 S. 10th St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3now or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday — Carolina Beach Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 & Atlanta Ave., Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Saturday — Riverfront Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, N. Water St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Sunday — Bluewater Waterfront Music

4–7 p.m. Summer concerts on the waterfront patio. Band schedule available online. Admission: Free. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

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Mozart & Brahms
Sponsor: Cambridge Village
Saturday, October 14
Barry David Salwen, piano

New World Symphony
Saturday, November 11
William Hueholt, piano

Polovtsian Dances
Sponsor: The Davis Community
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Julia Walker Jewell, piano

Don Giovanni
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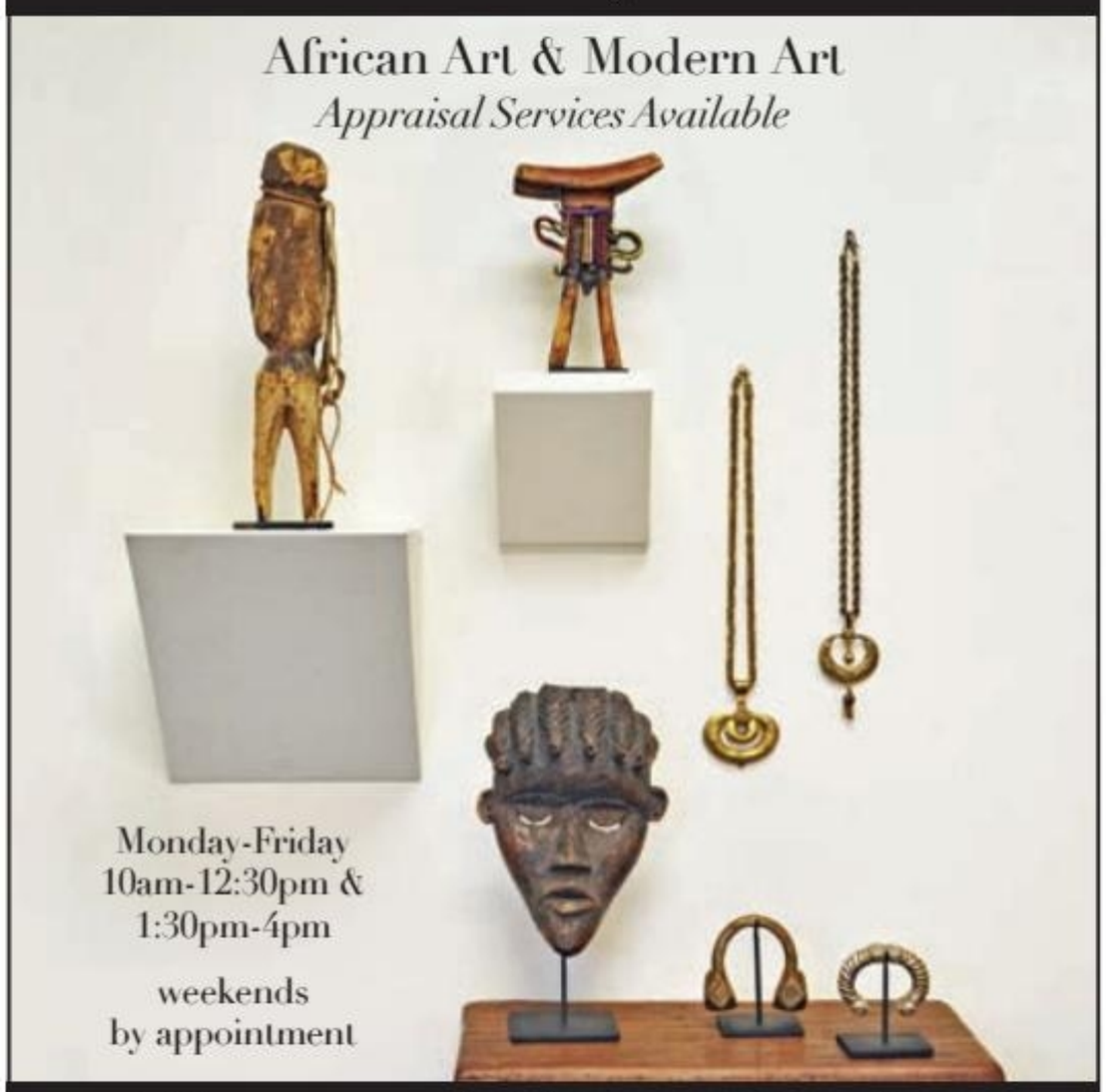
Charles Jones African Art



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Wilmington Art Association

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Visual Arts Organization
of the Cape Fear Coast

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- Monthly Member Meetings
- Socials, Field Trips, Paint-Outs
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www.wilmingtonart.org

Summer Harvest Festival

Saturday
September 16
9am-5pm
&
Sunday
September 17
10am-4pm

Carnival Games
Farmers' Market, Plants
Hand-made Arts & Crafts
Farm Animals, Wagon Rides
Food Trucks & You!

Folkstone Stringband &
Mojo Collins

Poplar Grove PLANTATION

$5 admission www.poplargrove.org

Port City People

4th Annual Raider Ball

USS Battleship North Carolina

Saturday, May 27, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

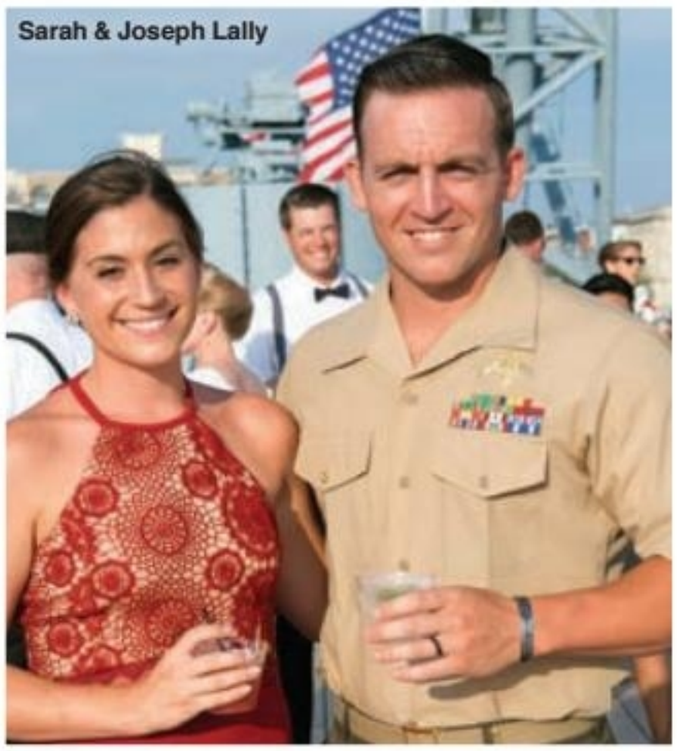
Diana & Zach Fearon

Bill Simpson, Brooke Rouse, Carrie & Mike Dragt

Danielle & Nick Kobus

Landon Smitherman, Callahan Brown, Clark Smitherman

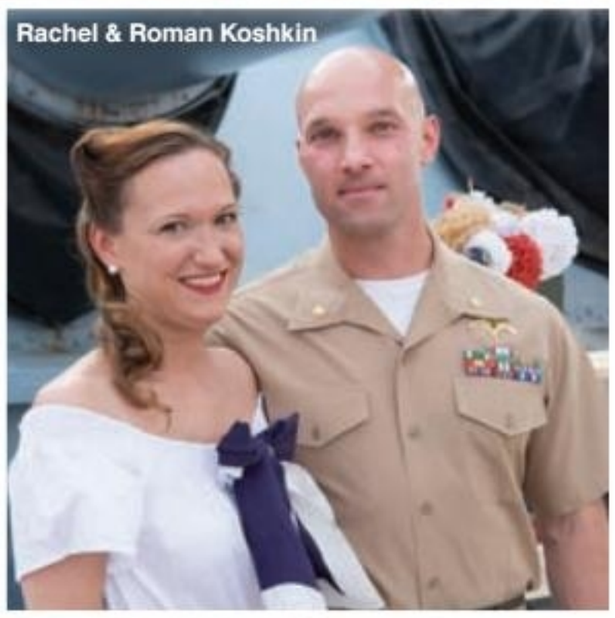
Jessica Jenson, Jennifer Vanek, Amy Armour


Sarah & Joseph Lally

Elizabeth & Brandon Langill

Bernadette De Nicola, Dan Tarantino

Bret & Nary Larrimore


Rachel & Roman Koshkin

Adrianne Orr, Leslie Cain, Anna Maris

Mike & Adriana Bloch

Greg Hoffmann, Joan Wilkerson

Port City People

7th Annual WARM "Raise the Roof" Gala & Auction

Friday, June 2, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Ralph, Megan & Tanner Konrad

Kenny & Melissa Woodruff, Jason Bolin

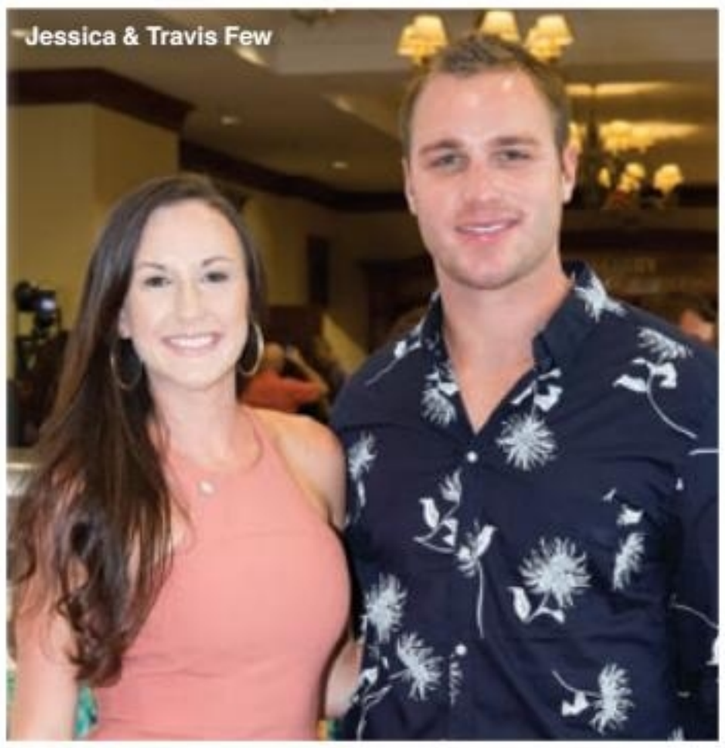
Christina Turner, Lois Steele, Laura Hayes Mitchell

Maryblake Williams, Rachael Ward, Stephanie Schauer

Beverly & Adam Ward

Brandy & John Gonzalez

Loren & Taylor Baysden

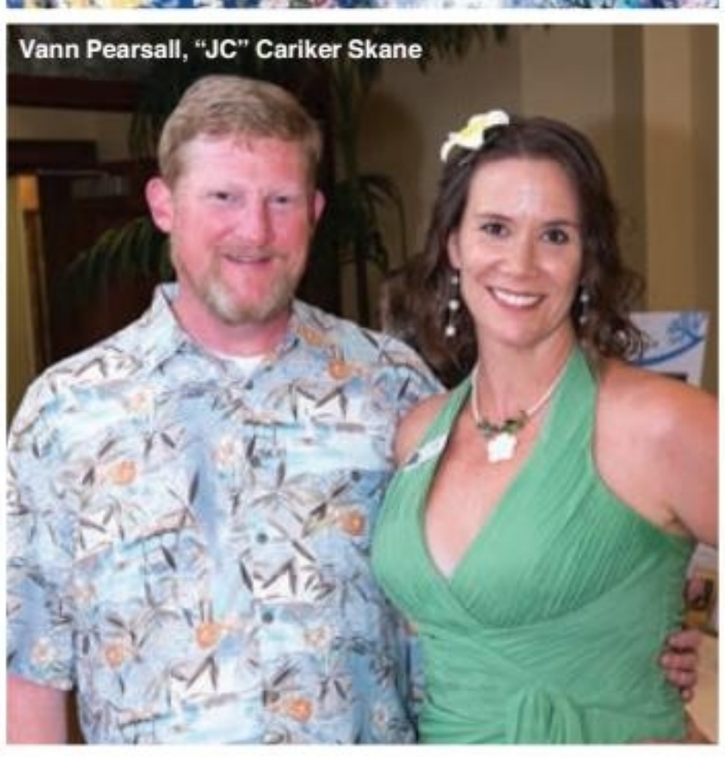


Jessica & Travis Few

Kallie & Brandon Graybender

Jerry & Terry Leeman

Tammy Hartley, Tim Simmons



Vann Pearsall, "JC" Cariker Skane

Port City People

Mister Roberts

Presented by Thalian Association Community Theatre

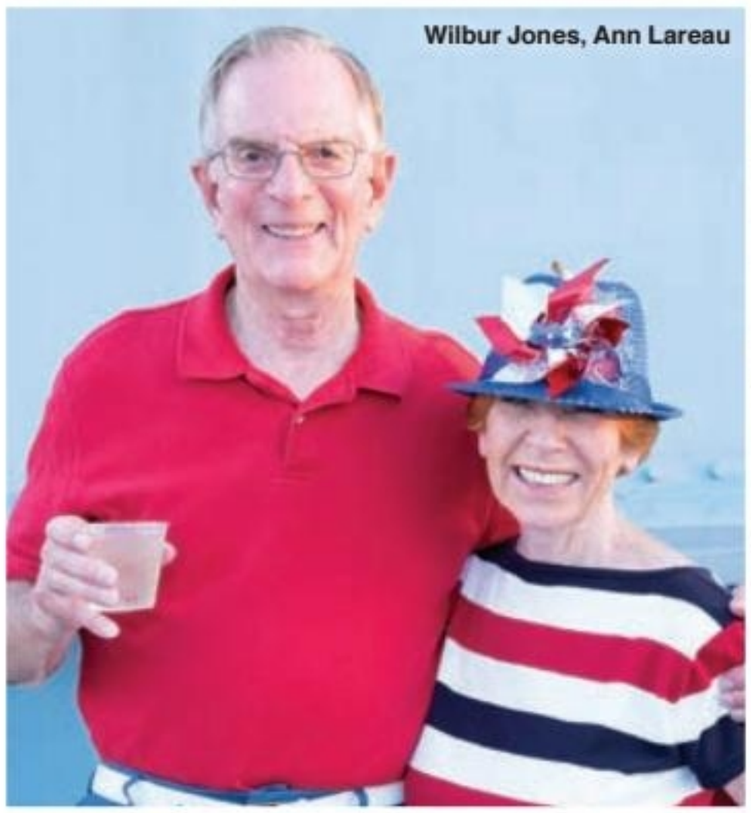
Tuesday, July 4, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Tom & Coleen Huse

Gerry & Susan Stanewick, Gerry & Sandy Sears

Capt. Terry Bragg, Susan Habas

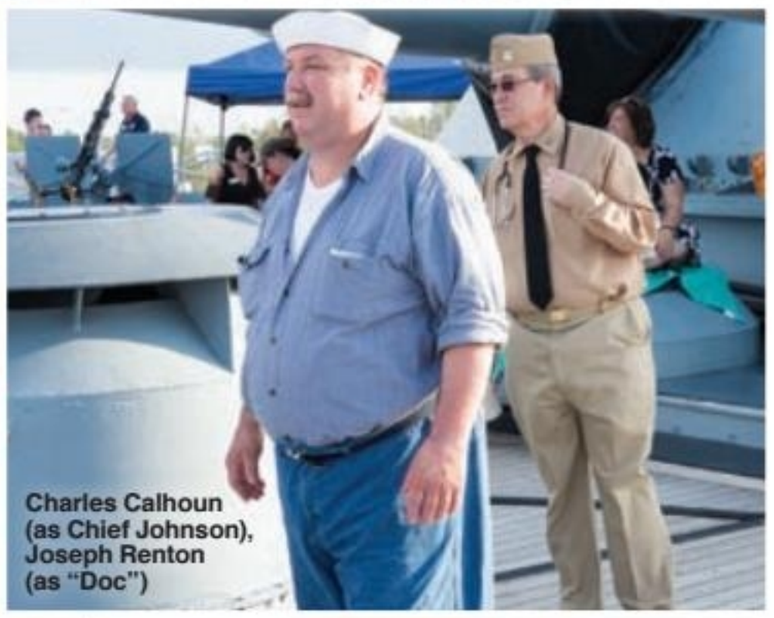

Wilbur Jones, Ann Lareau

Kimberlie, Addie & Greg Thompson

Stuart Pike (as Capt. Morton)

Iris Thomson, Dr. Don DiGiulian

Jeff Hidek (as Ensign Pulver), Katie Dees


Charles Calhoun (as Chief Johnson), Joseph Renton (as "Doc")

Richard & Gretchen Booth

Mike & Susan Habas

Matt Lejman, Megan Devonport

Port City People

Jazz at the Mansion

Bellamy Mansion

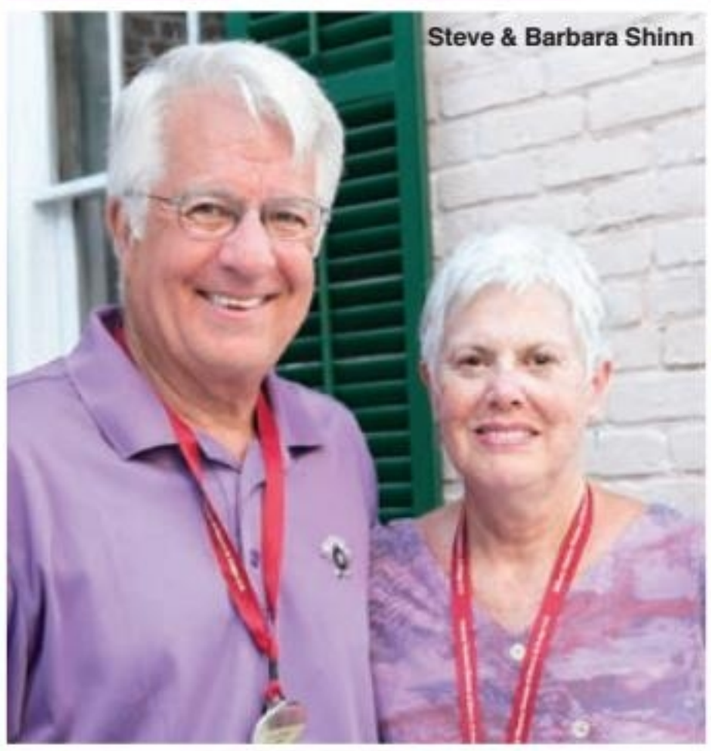
Thursday, July 13, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Sheila Santos, Simone Allen

Charles & Karen Bostaph

Kevin & Summer Sneed


Steve & Barbara Shinn

Seth & Gabby Meier

Pat & Tom DeBello

Beverley Dean, Philippe Vandatte

Nick & Julie St. Peter

Jay Martin, Olena Kilson

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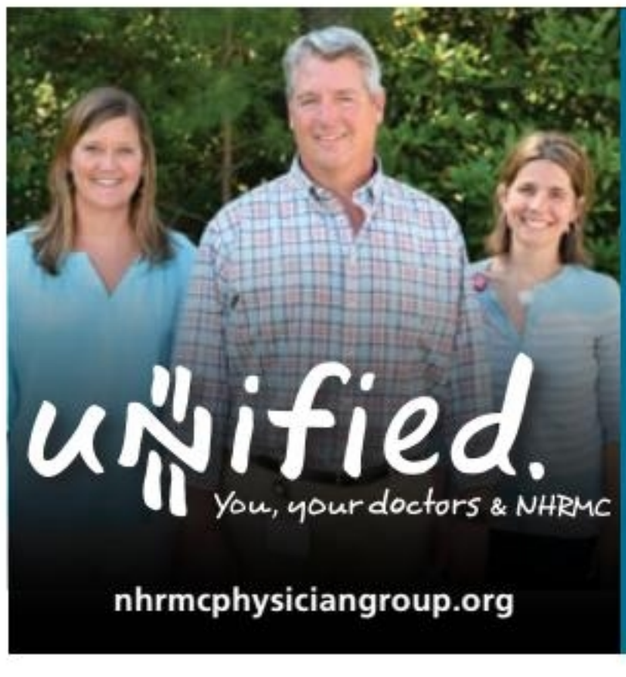

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Lordy, Leo!

Sun-ruled lions enter a creative phase

By Astrid Stellanova

Star Children like Alfred Hitchcock, Ben Affleck, J.Lo and former President Barack Obama just go to prove that Leos have more than feline grace going for them. Whatever they choose to do, those born under Leo like to lead. Simple fact is, we would all like to be a Leo at least once — most especially now. As the summer heats up, chill out. August has nearly everybody fussing about either somebody who wronged them or somebody they'd like to hit with an anvil. Take a chill pill and stop hollering. — Ad Astra, Astrid

Leo (July 23–August 22)
No lie, Child, this is a mighty fine year for your birth sign. Among other things, times are especially fine for creative projects and any ideas you hatch, match or dispatch. Many of us have wondered about (and envied) your special brand of magic. Birthday Baby, if you finally decide to write that tell-all you have been pondering, this is the perfect time to park yourself at the computer and get going. It is time to take a leap of faith. Everybody who knows you wants your Leo happiness, which is something that you can take straight to the bank.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Check the engine light, Sugar. You got overheated and are about to bust a hose. This red light is a warning. It does not mean you open up the throttle, but just the opposite. Put it in idle or coast down the road. What happened may not have been fair, but you will have to muddle on and not go hunting justice if you want peace.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
OK, you won. But just look in the mirror, Honey. It's like you've been on a forced march, judging by your expression. Take some time to consider that you won the battle and don't let one little peevish problem cause you so dang much frustration. It ain't nothing but a little ole distraction.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
Was THAT your Kumbaya moment? Lord help us! Try again, Sugar, to reconnect with some people who are in a position to help. There is something you desperately want, and if you play nicely with others, it is in your reach. Meanwhile, it is possible you may need to reconsider the end goal.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
It's nobody's beeswax what you've been up to, Sweetheart. Don't tell. Actually, puhleese don't tell. You have a very strong instinct about something and you've been listening to your inner voice. It won't lead you wrong, but most people just cannot understand the nature of your private obsession. Not yet, anyhow.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
You nearly fell out over what ought to be a happy surprise. Only slowly did you figure it all out. Now that you have, bask in the sunshine. There is something in the road that ain't nothing but a little old speed bump. If you slow down and remember this is what mud flaps are for, ain't no way any mud will to stick to you.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
You ticked off somebody close to you and never even knew it. They've been chewing that bone over. And over. If you feel like hollering about how unjust it is, just drink an RC Cola. Then move on down the road and let them figure it all out. By the time you meet up again, you will both be in a better place, Sweet Thing.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
A mysterious stranger is returning to close a chapter in your life. It is only significant because they need the closure even more than you do. Sweetie Pie, sometimes we get a chance to do someone a big old kindness, and the only reward is good karma. This is the case for you; score some celestial points.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
Shew we, Baby! Did you really mean to confess what you did? Nobody expects you to be tight-lipped, but I'm glad I ain't your lawyer. If you really want to dazzle others, the best thing to do is to shut up. You have a lot of social power, and don't dilute it by telling everything you know and everything you thought you knew. Take a time out before somebody puts Baby in the corner.

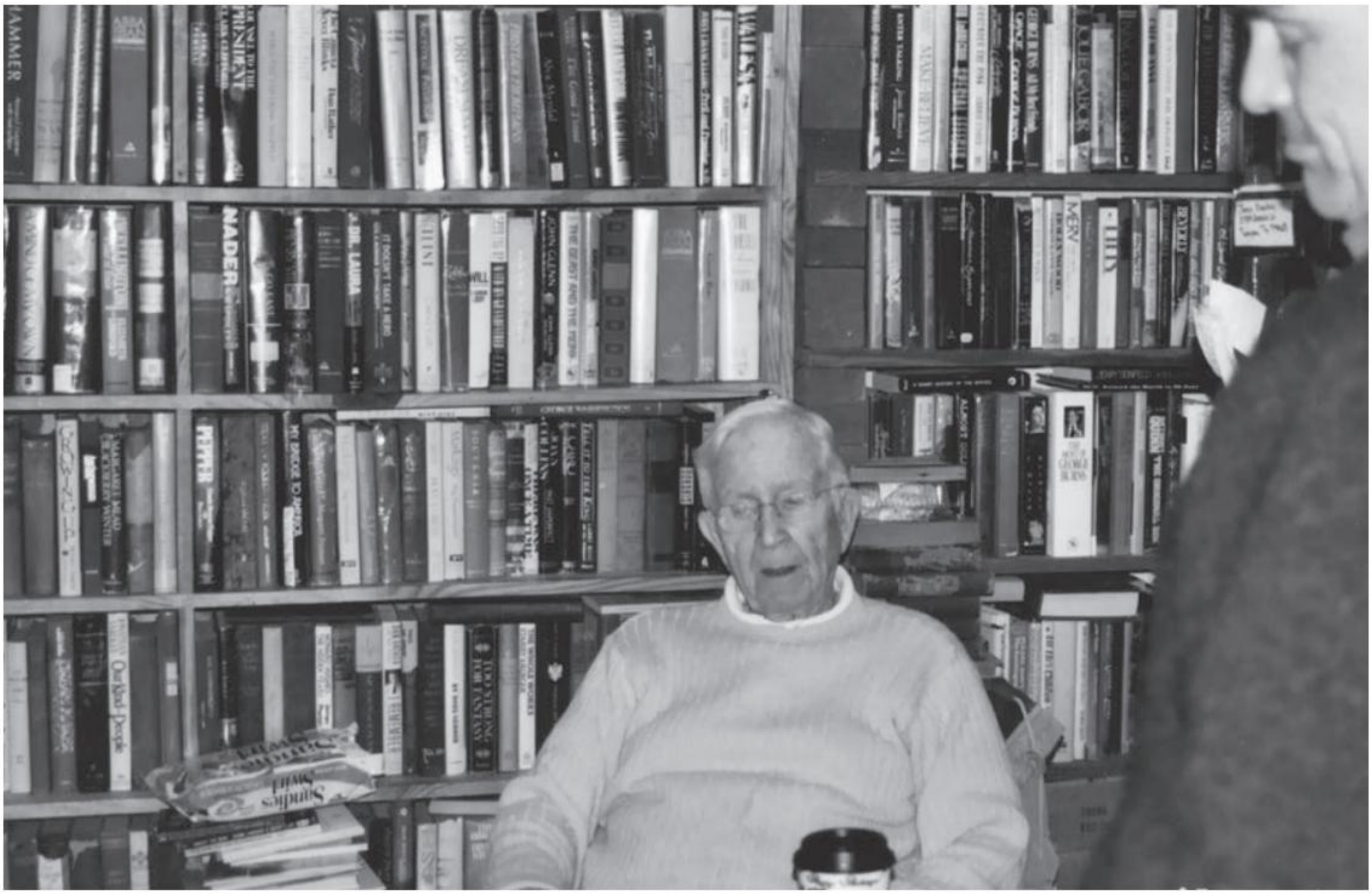
Taurus (April 20–May 20)
Life ain't a reality show. You're fixin' to gum up the works by climbing on the roof with a bullhorn to tell the whole world something that you got going on — or wish you did — or think you saw. Get at least one of those feet off the ladder and take a deep breath. What you are convinced happened may not have. At least wait for confirmation before you blow somebody's cover, Rambo.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
You got a parking ticket, but the way you've been carrying on has everyone thinking you've been thrown into the lion's den, just like Daniel. Seriously? As you were wailing about that misfortune to one and all, you missed at least two opportunities. This month holds more good fortune than bad, and a very smart move, Honey Bun, is to recognize that you are the lucky one.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
You were born naked, screaming and afraid, just like the rest of us, Honey. Just look at how far you have come, but still frustrated! A rock that moves does not get fuzzy stuff on it, right? Or is it that a rolling stone gathers no moss? You keep moving forward and you still find yourself in the exact right spot this month. Time out is what is needed, and time to detach.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Man of Many Words

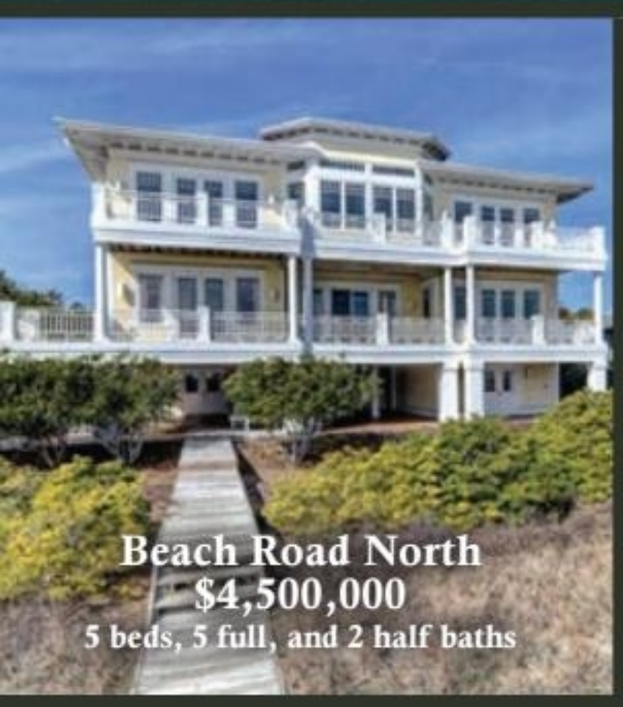


PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NEW HANOVER PUBLIC LIBRARY, CAPE FEARIANS COLLECTION

Richard Daughtry in his bookstore, Old Books on Front Street, 2004

Originally in the Gaylord Building beginning in 1982, the shop moved to a storefront next to the Bailey Theatre facade for 25 years. Daughtry eventually sold the bookstore and its inventory to Gwenyfar Rohler, a lifelong customer who first started coming to the shop as a child. Her shop, Old Books on Front Street, has been at 249 North Front since 2010.

Discover Figure Eight Island



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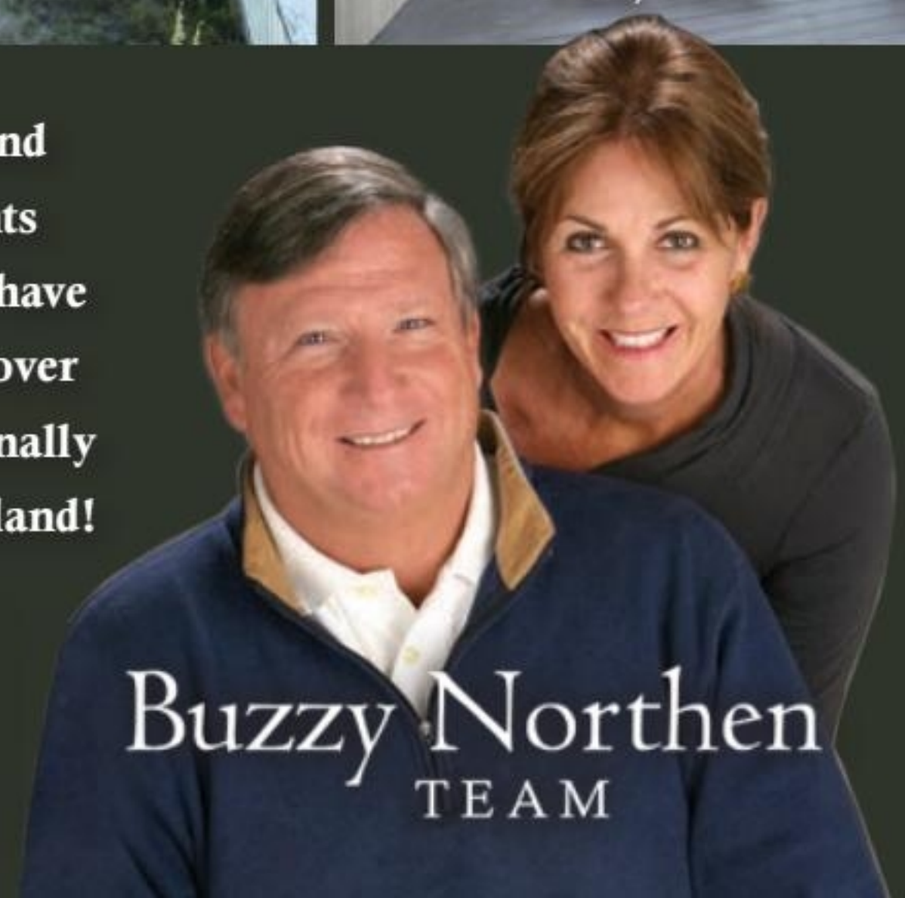

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